

Introduction

The Anthropology of Catholicism

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In one of his final books, the late American Catholic priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley attempted to elaborate what he called “the Catholic imagination.” The working of this imagination, he wrote, is “most obvious in the Church’s seven sacraments but the seven sacraments are both a result and a reinforcement of a much broader Catholic view of reality.”¹ This reality, stressed Greeley, is essentially enchanted—one in which an immanent God “lurks in aroused human love and reveals Himself to us through it” and in which “God leaves all kinds of hints of Her presence, but slips away just at the moment we think we might have caught a glimpse of Her.”² Greeley’s brand of Christian sociological apologetics would likely have drawn skepticism from anthropologists, for whom such a universalizing view of Catholic subjectivity would be anathema. But it is a project of this kind of scope and ambition that this volume is in curious sympathy with. If there were such a thing as a “broader Catholic view of reality,” what would it look like? What sorts of theoretical conversations would it provoke both within and outside itself? And more to the point, what exactly would a set of fine-grained ethnographies reveal about Catholicism as a global phenomenon, as an object of immense historical depth and significance, as a political form, and as a “lived religion” constituting everyday worlds? Would they move Greeley to modify some of his suppositions?

Global Catholicism has seen some tumultuous events in the last century alone, but the number of studies by anthropologists about Catholicism remains woefully small. Thus, in a self-conscious effort to get a critical conversation about Catholicism off the ground, this volume pulls together work by scholars past and present to explore the many dimensions of Catholicism as a “world religion” in the broadest sense. This book is the first time that anthropological approaches have been

brought together explicitly under the umbrella term *anthropology of Catholicism*. Moreover, it is the first volume of its kind to occur in conversation with the anthropology of Christianity that emerged as a self-conscious intellectual movement about fifteen years ago, and at a historical, global conjuncture that impels us to rethink “religion” by emancipating the concept from its long-unacknowledged Christian underpinnings.³ Within its pages, Catholicism comes to light both through and beyond the “sacramental imagination,” as a political and institutional form, a contested set of practices, and an embodied and ethical orientation to the world. We believe that bringing these essays together makes it easier to see not only what makes Catholicism distinctive from other kinds of Christianity but also how Catholicism opens windows onto areas of debate within the discipline of anthropology more widely. Far from promoting the anthropology of Catholicism as a sub-sub-subdiscipline within the anthropology of Christianity, we echo Thomas Csordas’s call in this volume to bring studies of Christianity “back into the larger fold of comparativist anthropology of religion.” In other words, an anthropology of Catholicism needs to develop within the discipline of anthropology more broadly as well as playing a productive role in interdisciplinary dialogues beyond anthropology.

The work of fresh ethnographic exploration and new anthropological conversation around Catholicism has certainly begun, but there is still a way to go. We need more studies, more ethnographic data, and, above all, deeper reflections on the ethical and political complexities of Catholicism today. In the following pages, our aim is to sketch out some of the themes we feel have been, and still promise to be, particularly productive for anthropologists of Catholicism to explore. Broadly speaking, these themes include power and institutionalism, “syncretism,” gender, materiality, and concepts of mediation. Although the subheadings that follow do not aspire to be comprehensive in scope, we hope they will highlight key concepts and ideas—some old, others new—that Catholicism can teach us a lot about but that ethnographers have yet to plumb and repurpose for a contemporary audience.

THE INVISIBLE FAITH

As anyone who researches and writes on Christianity knows, it can be a daunting task to find anything to say that has not already been said or intimated before. Over two thousand years of writing and scholarship precede any present-day scholar of Christianity, sometimes illuminating but often overshadowing the places she wishes to go. For ethnographers of the contemporary whose primary means of investigation is participant observation in ordinary life-worlds, it can be hard to escape a nagging sense of *déjà vu*. Such a sense is compounded within the discipline of anthropology by the knowledge that studies of people who define themselves as Christian are also nothing new. All the same, it is generally accepted

that while anthropologists have been exploring Christian cultures since the discipline's inception, prior to the emergence of an explicitly formulated anthropology of Christianity these writings did not cohere together around Christianity as an object or produce much ground for cross-cultural comparison. In this ethnographic "prehistory" phase, so the story goes, not enough attention was drawn to the Christian-ness of people, in part because, as Fenella Cannell posited, Christianity was not a legitimate topic for anthropology⁴—even if it shaped the personal lives of key anthropologists of the mid-twentieth century, including E. E. Evans Pritchard, Godfrey Lienhardt, Victor Turner, and Mary Douglas.⁵ The interesting thing about this prehistory, however, is that much of it—particularly pertaining to Europe and Latin America—was in fact about Catholicism. Why then Catholicism's apparent invisibility as an object of study in its own right?

A key example of such invisibility can be found in a brilliant essay by Julian Pitt-Rivers on "grace" that we reproduce in abridged form in Part One.⁶ Although the term *grace*, in this essay, is acknowledged to have Christian theological roots, Pitt-Rivers draws our attention to this point almost in passing. Grace interests Pitt-Rivers, not because it is in any sense constitutive of a Christian or even Catholic self, but because it is a monotheistic analogue for *mana* or *hau*—a force immanent in the social. Indeed, Pitt-Rivers's discussion was never an explicit attempt to generate conversation with other scholars of Christianity, and hence it has little to say about the subtle variations that exist between different Christian understandings of grace. Protestant/Catholic conflicts over theologies of "grace" are arguably reflected in different cultural practices and values concerning gifts and exchanges, but Pitt-Rivers does not focus on this possibility. However, it is worth noting that Pitt-Rivers's discussion of grace draws deeply from his experience as an ethnographer of the Catholic town of Grazalema in southern Spain. What he produces, therefore, is arguably a distinctively Catholic European prototype for grace, in which the Eucharist, Mass, confession, prayer and penance, and material substances like incense, wine, and oil are its primary channels into the world. Furthermore, Pitt-Rivers observes the way that "honor" and grace articulate and depart from one another, tied as they are to a gendered division of affect where grace is the province of women, the reverse of a masculine honor that inheres in will and ambition. Pitt-Rivers thus reproduces the notion of a gendered divine panoply (in which the Virgin stands as a central symbol) that is distinctively and undoubtedly *Catholic*.

In such earlier anthropological forays around Catholicism, of which Pitt-Rivers's text on grace is one example, Catholicism itself remains implicit and deferred. Yet these texts deserve to be revisited, we argue, not only for what they might reveal about the hidden grammar of Catholicism, but also for what they show us about how studies of Catholic contexts moved scholars to be theoretically very innovative. In his provocative essay in this volume, Simon Coleman offers us a valuable conceptual architecture for understanding the questions presented by Catholicism

within a wider anthropology of religion. The idea of a Catholic grammar in particular provides a fruitful tool for appreciating how Catholicism and Protestantism can share a broader Christian language but also diverge in significant ways. In the wider ecology Catholicism is not necessarily performing drastically different salvific and other functions from other Christianities, yet the modalities by which it performs these functions are peculiar and raise particular sorts of questions.

With regard to the question of Catholicism's relative "invisibility" in earlier ethnographic studies, we need to consider the profound tendencies of both Catholic and Orthodox forms of Christianity to structure communities at all levels—to exhibit, as Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz put it, a "high degree of congruence with secular, national identities."⁷ In earlier ethnographic accounts of southern Europe, Catholicism is present as a system that has become so deeply constitutive of life-worlds that it barely registers as distinct. If the Catholic Church remains powerful in this region of the world in its "invisibility," it is in no small part a reflection of its ostensible dominion over all secular powers and forms of government in most of Europe between the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century and the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth.

We might speculate that Catholicism's presence-as-nonpresence in many Mediterranean ethnographies is indicative not only of its success as a cultural form but also of its politico-historical legacy and subsequent naturalization in the institutional sense.⁸ As with other dominant sociocultural positions in Western societies—maleness, for example, or whiteness—that are similarly undeveloped as prominent categories because of the power already wielded by those who occupy them, Catholicism's relative invisibility could, in the southern and eastern European context at least, be linked to its historical connection with deeply entrenched systems of power. However, as David Mosse reminds us in his contribution to this volume, if we have an impression of Catholicism as a coherent and universal cultural system it is because it has been "hard won" through the conscious formation of religion as a distinct category. Hence the original problematic concerning Christianity's late theoretical foregrounding in anthropology, as formulated by Fenella Cannell and Joel Robbins, requires more qualification in the case of Catholicism.⁹ In other words, we contend that there is something particular about Catholicism's proclivity to cultural invisibility that makes it, as a form of Christianity, peculiar and thus worthy of study.

CATHOLICISM ACROSS TIME

One of the curious things about Catholicism is its endurance in the face of crisis. It would be easy to assume that, given secularizing trajectories or the wildfire spread of Protestant evangelical and Pentecostal forms of Christianity across the globe, the modern Catholic Church is in decline. Shifting away from the efferves-

cence of pilgrimage and “folk-syncretic practice” in the 1960s and 1970s, a raft of studies in the eighties were particularly gloomy. These studies were produced during the emergence of neoliberal economies worldwide, at a time when anthropology was entrenched in debates concerning rationality, modernities, and the failure of these originally perceived liberatory projects of “development.” As Pentecostalism started to attract attention, studies emerged that predicted Catholicism’s ossification and demise.¹⁰ In the secular Western media, the critique of Catholicism as a medieval, archaic form of religion converged with a slew of sex and financial scandals within the church. In our own fieldwork settings in Brazil and Mexico through the 1990s and early 2000s, we ourselves witnessed the rising numbers of converts to evangelical Christianity, some of whom bitterly maligned the corruption and lack of relevance of the Catholic Church. Given this picture, what becomes remarkable is not Catholicism’s decline but its endurance and continuity despite such pressures—whether institutional, social, or cultural—from Catholics and non-Catholics alike. To what should we attribute this remarkable resilience in the face of doubts and scandals that tear at it today? This is one of the questions that a contemporary anthropology of Catholicism needs to ask, particularly if it wishes to break new theoretical ground.

A strong theme in the more recent anthropological literature on Christianity is that of “rupture,” “discontinuity,” and “breaks with the past.”¹¹ According to Robbins, many forms of Christianity do stress radical change, to the extent that rupture and discontinuity are real experiences in many converts’ lives. Robbins’s observations, drawn from his own fieldwork among converts to a Protestant millennial form of Christianity in Papua New Guinea, led to his famous critique of anthropology as a discipline overly attracted toward what he called “continuity thinking.” When claims of rupture are made by Christian research participants, he argued, these are too often treated with suspicion by anthropologists who “suspect that those who make these claims are not Christians at all or at least that they fail to live up to their own self-professed Christian ideals concerning discontinuity and change.”¹² Although Robbins’s critique caused debate about the nature of “rupture” to flourish within the discipline, attention to rupture’s conceptual counterpart, “continuity” or “endurance,” has been slower to emerge.¹³ For the anthropology of Catholicism this remains a problem, for continuity emerges time and again as an ethnographic concept in its own terms in the guise of “tradition”—a value that derives partly from the theological principle of apostolic succession. Catholicism’s rhetorical reliance on original, transcendent truth, on the enduring character and depth of tradition, and on the very notion of apostolic succession—the thread of permanent repetition that constitutes church authority—points not toward a continuity of “simple” reproduction but toward one of considerable labor. Such labor is present, for example, in recent moves on the part of the Catholic Church to mend long-standing fractures to its “one, holy and apostolic” body.

Since the 1950s, for example, it has allowed married Anglican vicars to convert and join the Roman priesthood, and since 2009 ordinary married Church of England converts have been allowed to be ordained as priests. Under Pope Benedict XVI attempts were also made to bring Orthodox Church leaders back into the fold through high-profile ecumenical meetings and, in 2007, through the drafting of a “joint document” in Ravenna, Italy, that addressed (or perhaps zigzagged around) the question of papal primacy over all Catholic and Orthodox bishops.

This question of continuity is given careful ethnographic illustration in Eric Hoenes del Pinal’s discussion in this volume of Charismatic lay leaders’ negotiation of their relationship to the mainstream church. As Hoenes shows, renewal movements that seek to remain Catholic but to differentiate themselves from the mainstream remain constrained by the fact that ultimate spiritual authority (and a rich material resource base) derive from an umbilical link to “the one true church.” Indeed, a close reading of the history of key Catholic renewal movements such as the Charismatic Catholic Renewal suggests that success and survival depend not so much on foregrounding a radical discontinuity with the past as on maintaining an optimal balance of difference and sameness in relation to a mainstream spiritual center. In such contexts what is paramount is not “rupture” but endurance, despite or even as product of an ever-expanding *Mater Ecclesia*.

This is not to deny that the schismatic possibility of forming alternative centers lurks *in potentia* in all forms of Christianity in the Christian tendency to endorse ideals that can never be fully realized.¹⁴ Indeed, as the essays here reveal, Catholicism, like any other form of Christianity, is continually subjected to critique and renewal, as well as to accommodations and evolutions. Robert Orsi’s chapter in this book looks at one of the most profoundly faith-rattling issues for contemporary Catholics, the scandal of sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy. Orsi’s compassionate account of the anguish of survivors of abuse at the hands of Catholic clerics in Chicago allows us to see that (as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions the world over have shown us) “healing” is a complex and vexed process fraught with ambivalence. There is an interesting linkage between Orsi’s and Maya Mayblin’s chapters in that both take up the question of Catholic responses to the sex abuse scandal. Whereas Orsi’s focus is on abuse survivors, Mayblin explores how the ellipses and equivocations surrounding the potent matter of sexuality in the church intersect with Catholic understandings of sin in ways that complicate the politics surrounding the ordination of women.

Orsi’s and Mayblin’s chapters are among the first ever anthropological treatments of such topics and could be read as portents of institutional change. Indeed, if the decreasing number of “practicing Catholics” (particularly in the West) is to be considered alongside the steady—if highly contentious—increase of ordained Roman Catholic women priests worldwide, it might be assumed that the Roman Catholic Church is, at the present time, in the muted throes of schism.¹⁵ Yet it is

perhaps too early to tell if we are seeing the crest of one tradition breaking to reform as another.¹⁶ Returning to the *longue durée*, it is worth noting that Catholicism has ridden out many such waves, and as the essays here and beyond reveal, Catholicism remains remarkable in its capacity to contain dissent, even taking its strength from a range of divergent, sometimes wildly disarticulated practices, whether monastic, clerical, or lay.¹⁷

CATHOLICISM ACROSS CULTURES

Catholicism's longitudinal axis—its sheer age and its conscious self-elaboration as a faith revealed only in and through a singularly enduring material institution is crossed by its latitudinal axis of diversity in terms of practice.¹⁸ It might be noted that Catholicism is spatially and organizationally elastic in that it can stretch to contain a bewildering variety of devotional structures and theological positions without breaking. Indeed, Catholicism's strength seems to be based as much on its rhetorical toleration of locality and difference as on its universalizing, and highly centralized, “infallible” core. At least part of Catholicism's remarkable resilience of form derives from the many modalities (theological, praxeological, and infra-structural) by which it is able to collapse the “many” into the “one,” only to allow the “many” to concertina out again, should the context demand.¹⁹ Consider, for example, how a single (Roman) center of authority translates, over time, into a multitude of private lay organizations and missionary orders; how a single God (though at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may be accessed through a plethora of saints; how a single Virgin Mary embraces an array of different names; and how a single priest embraces in his role as “spiritual father” a multitude of lay. This paradoxical capacity for singularity and multiplicity to coexist may not be unique to Catholicism, but it points to something peculiarly “gymnastic” about Catholicism's engagement with the world.²⁰

In the vast territories of the European colonial empires in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the violence of conquest bled irredeemably into the project of conversion, so that the two often constituted the same thing. Nevertheless, the clergy's periodic openness to a degree of deviation from church teachings, its readiness to mimic indigenous sacred forms or to adopt these to ease catechistic or other religious teaching, and the inherent indeterminacy of religious evangelization meant that conversion was never quite the before/after story that emerged in Protestant settings. And this has made “syncretism”—traditionally, the blending or meshing of separate religious systems into a new integral tradition—a key theme in ethnographies of Catholic settings everywhere, especially in Latin America, the region embracing more avowed Catholics than anywhere else in the world.²¹

Syncretic strategies produced by the church “from above” with the specific aim of enfolding “the many” within the “one” are arguably as old as Catholicism itself,

although they became more elaborated during the sixteenth century, when humanist philosophies emerging in Europe afforded missionaries scope to tolerate and even incorporate indigenous, plastic modes of engaging with the sacred.²² Post-Vatican II missionary projects continued this tradition under the banner of “inculturation,” promoting concern for the retrieval and reinvigoration of indigenous or local sacred concepts and practices within an “official” Catholic framework.²³

By way of attention to the nature and evolution of the missionary encounter, David Mosse’s work unpacks the complex historiography of Catholic accommodation to local sacred forms in the context of India.²⁴ In India, missionaries came to depend upon a series of subtle and continually crystalizing distinctions that had never been necessary before: first among these was a conception of Christian truth apart from the cultures and languages in which it would be expressed, and second was a conceptual separation of the indigenous social world into the “idolatrous” and the “purely civil.” A key but contingent evolution was a concept of “culture” that allowed early Jesuits to clothe the faith in semiotic forms acceptable to India’s powerful elite castes (in sum, to survive so far from its European center, Catholicism had to blend with and support the hierarchical forms it found on the Asian continent). Only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did the church in India set about describing itself much more as a separate domain of “religion” in the sense of the word that emerged subsequent to the Reformation. Catholicism, in this context, was never, argues Mosse, a “transcultural” essence but rather an emergent field of concept and practice, the product of particular regional histories having particular effects.²⁵

Catholic missionaries have arguably long used forms of ritual and linguistic accommodation as an evangelical strategy. Yet only in the wake of Vatican II did an elaborated Catholic theology of “inculturation” come into being. The results and uptake of this theology did of course vary. European missionaries were not immune to the frequently racist assumptions of the cultures from which they came, and the diversity of their responses to what they found in the missionary encounter reflected this. Thus idioms of both “savagery” and “civilization” trailed alongside projects of inculturation—something evident in the very different levels of respect that European missionaries had for the “cultures” they encountered in Asia as opposed to Africa. In a cogent critique of the post-Vatican II “inculturation” doctrine in Africa, Ludovic Lado points to the various ways in which the supposed dialogue between the Catholic Church and “African religions” “is not a dialogue between equal religions.” There have to be questions about the appropriateness of this sort of “dialogue,” argues Lado, for “all that is really happening is that Christians are talking about African religions. There is no way for the African religions to talk back.”²⁶ Writing of the contemporary Mexican context in a similar vein, Kristin Norget draws our attention to the carefully orchestrated syncretic public rituals of an inculturationist church where an “eclectic collation of Catholic

liturgical staples” are juxtaposed with “authentic” native folkloric elements “whose ethnic signification [is] emblematic and non-specific.”²⁷ In this manner, she argues, inculturation works in practice to hold the Other within the Catholic Church’s “paternalistic fold.”²⁸

The current demographic reality is that most of the world’s Catholics now live outside Europe, in the global South, and many of them in indigenous communities. In these terms indigeneity—the politicized valence of “Otherness” in church discourse—is Catholicism’s nemesis or elastic end point. Yet as recent contestation around the theological endurance of a fifteenth-century papal bull on the dominion over American indigenous people would suggest, vestiges of the church’s colonial-evangelical drive remain problematically present to this day.²⁹ In Valentina Napolitano’s discussion of the “Atlantic Return,” the unresolved tensions of past colonial endeavors come subtly to the fore in issues surrounding Latin America migrant itineraries. While growing numbers of Latin American migrants in Rome present something of a troubling inversion of the original colonial-evangelical project, they also mark an ongoing challenge to Eurocentric notions of Catholic identity. In this subtly layered ethnographic account we see how transnational migrants work to renew and re-hew the institution from within, even as they tell “stories of a struggle for inclusion and autonomy.”³⁰ Public performances of the church’s new evangelization replete with inculturated elements of indigeneity (dances, music, language, material culture, local saints) have, over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, become indicative of Catholicism’s cosmopolitanism—its way of dealing with cultural differences through a self-conscious recognition and legitimation of “other” practices and symbols—*contra* the globalism of Pentecostalist charismatic and evangelical movements, which tend to incorporate such differences by reversing their moral charge.³¹ The signifying force of indigeneity in such contexts may be skewed by a legacy of epistemic coloniality built into Catholic theological reasoning, but this does not necessarily foreclose the indexical potency of such signs. As Matthew Engelke and Matt Tomlinson put it in their discussion on the “limits of meaning” across Christian cultures, new signs, like compass needles, “can swing back magnetically to their previous associations, transforming both prior and future contexts and meanings.”³² Thus, in Liana Chua’s discussion of Catholic Borneo in Southeast Asia, the “Bidayuh culture” that is featured on major calendrical feast days is aesthetic and object centered, much like the sanctioned versions on offer to tourists in gift shops: “Bidayuh baskets, brass gongs, and swirling, geometric paintings reminiscent of Kayan and Kenyah artwork.”³³ Nevertheless, it leaves the door ajar for “deft conceptual criss-crossing” that allows the faithful to preserve an all-important element of continuity with the “old ways.”³⁴ A complex understanding of “syncretism” in the context of Catholicism, as a conscious and controlled strategy of incorporation offset (or complemented) by unplanned processes of synthesis and erasure can be found in the work of Andrew Orta.³⁵ Orta analyzes the

ayuno performance of Aymara Catholics (an intracommunal event correlated with the start of the planting season) on two analytical dimensions: first, as an adjunct performance of a practice newly officialized by the inculturationalist Catholic Church, and second, as an example of a cultural practice that exceeds the legible meanings intended by the missionaries. Such rituals, argues Orta, “enact a form of meaning that is always irreducible to the commensurability, legibility, and fixity of Christian meaning.”³⁶

Questions of “commensurability, legibility, and fixity” have been (and continue to be) as relevant for the church in Europe as they are for the church of the global South. Debates about “syncretism” refract throughout Ernesto de Martino’s classic work on southern Italian *tarantismo* for example,³⁷ and in an essay on Portuguese Catholicism Caroline Brettell broached the issue through the notion of “contract.” Catholicism, she argued, is everywhere “an accommodation”—a “contractual relationship between the doctrinal definition of religion adhered to by the parish priest and other church officials and the ideas about religion and community behaviour that are the will of the people.”³⁸ Take, for example, the priest in the northwestern Portuguese village studied by Joao Pina-Cabral, who attempts to assume greater control of the fiesta of St. Sebastian (his chosen saint), yet is defeated by his parishioners when they refuse to attend.³⁹ Although the racial and political undertones of this kind of power struggle are different from those to be found in colonial and postcolonial contexts, the on-the-ground dynamics of clerical capitulations to Other wills and Other customs may be very much the same.

Consequently, inasmuch as all social interactions involve a certain degree of slippage (or “charitable” accommodation), “official” versions of Catholicism, replete with established vocabularies, material practices, and social authority, *are* indeed compromised, as are “popular” practices in their turn.⁴⁰ A useful framework for thinking about this has been provided by Webb Keane, who distinguishes between, on the one hand, “available vocabularies, material practices, norms for argumentation and the authority to take them up” and, on the other, that which is as yet unformed: “the ineluctable specificity of circumstance” or “the surface of things.”⁴¹ Keane’s purpose with this is to move our understanding of human ethics and actions, moment-by-moment decisions and occurrences—what, indeed, we might call “culture”—away from abstract principles and instrumental rationality and toward “collaborative acts of framing” and the “divergent possibilities” of experience. As Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart write, “Conundrums of agency and intentionality make syncretism very slippery, but it is precisely its capacity to contain paradox, contradiction and polyphony which makes syncretism such a powerful symbolic process.”⁴² But is simply recognizing Catholicism as a living system of “polyphony” enough? Is it possible to distinguish between syncretism as a transparent descriptive term for social life in general from syncretism in the religious context of Catholic practice? Scholarship on Catholicism surely demands

some sort of creative refashioning of the term, one that can combine both the theological and sociological possibilities of the word—a reappropriation in which syncretism is neither an inevitable, teleological social process simply unfolding nor an entirely willed *modus operandi* on the part of church.⁴³ In many ways what is required for a contemporary anthropology of Catholicism to flourish is a *new, syncretic* definition of syncretism (for new analytical purposes). By this new syncretic definition, *syncretism* denotes what arises when explicitly formulated inculcation (a conscious, strategic *theology of blending*) combines with the implicit everyday praxes of *creative lenience* (a mixture of will, responsiveness, environment, and happenstance).

CATHOLICISM AS INSTITUTION

For some time now, “lived religion” has functioned within religious studies as a kind of catchall concept that emphasizes people’s own experience of their faith as they carry out their religious practices in the realm of the everyday. Popularized especially by Robert Orsi’s work on Italian Catholics in Chicago and New York City, the concept was introduced as a corrective to the preoccupation with text-focused analyses that dominated religious studies, helping to paint a vibrant picture of Catholicism as very much socially and culturally contoured.⁴⁴ Such an approach may seem obvious to anthropologists, but one of its less explored consequences has been to highlight some of the axiomatic tensions between individual experiences and institutional prescriptions. Rather than mapping this tension onto a problematic opposition between “great” versus “little” religious traditions, we suggest that to understand Catholicism as “lived religion” challenges us to include not just people’s own views and ways of exercising their faith but an appreciation of Catholicism as a continually crystalizing system of patterns, replete with infrastructures, dogmas, and “official positions” that must be made and responded to in differing ways.⁴⁵

Recent sociology of religion in western Europe shows evidence of a growing rejection of mainline organized forms of religion.⁴⁶ Western moderns are more likely to self-identify as “spiritual” than religious, and much of this appears to be down to a popular mistrust of institutions. Such mistrust has been echoed, perhaps unconsciously, in much contemporary ethnography on religion, where the overwhelming focus is on newer charismatic practices, cognitive experiences, and individual phenomenologies of the sacred.⁴⁷ Within the anthropology of Christianity in particular the attention paid to language, individual transcendence, and the materiality of Christian belief has deflected attention away from those “mundane power relations within and between churches which depend in turn on wider secular macromaterialities.”⁴⁸ Hann’s call to complement the insights we have gleaned from recent explorations of materiality and language with more attention to “larger frames” is part of one ongoing project to reorient the anthropology of

Christianity back toward political economy.⁴⁹ In a similar vein, John Barker notes the importance of attention to infrastructure for a comparative anthropology of Christianity because, despite its infinite variations, “One of the defining characteristics of the 2,000-year expansion of Christianity across the globe is the planting of enduring institutional structures operating at local, regional and international levels.”⁵⁰ Hann and Barker are surely right in urging anthropologists to grapple with the economic, bureaucratic, and political bases of Christian organizations. But given the remarkable fact that Catholicism is both the largest and the oldest religious organization that the Western world has ever known, we suggest that a full engagement with Catholicism necessitates more than this; it necessitates a return to the analytical concept of “institution,” and thus to fundamental questions about the relation between individual and collective, between structure and agency, between the very nature of society itself and the forces that construct and reproduce it.

We need to ask both how and why Catholicism continues to be the single largest and most politically dominant Christian denomination in the world. This is no easy task, yet we might begin to move toward a better understanding by rethinking and refining our current uses of terms such as *institution* and *organization*. In her study of Marian apparitions in Transcarpathian Ukraine, Agnieszka Halemba critiques the interchangeability with which social scientists tend to use these two terms. Halemba argues for a clear analytical distinction between them, based on “the respective level of recognition of a given pattern of social behavior as separate from other aspects of life.”⁵¹ Religious organizations—various as they are—all have explicit rules and are objectified “not primarily by researchers but by the people involved in their operation.”⁵² Organizations, she points out, have rules that are explicitly defined—often even codified in writing. But their most important feature is that “they are perceived by social actors as entities that can act as if they were persons.”⁵³ In contrast, the meaning of *institution* is more slippery. Researchers may use the word to refer to patterns of repetition, reproduction, and stabilization in human interaction that people themselves do not necessarily objectify as “special” or “set apart” from the rest of their lives. Hence whereas marriage, kinship, witchcraft, and neoliberalism may be identified by social scientists as “social institutions,” their rules may be largely implicit and hence may need to be extracted by a researcher from actions and accounts. Adopting this heuristic distinction allows us to ask more precise questions: What could micro-level ethnographic explorations of Catholic organizations (structuring mechanisms clearly objectified by the actors involved) tell us about the nature of Catholicism as an institution? Following this, how could recent sociological understandings of institutions as “ingenious combinations of personalities and materialities” help us understand how Catholicism (as individual experience, as religious organization, *and* as social institution) endures over time?⁵⁴

An understanding of the Catholic Church as an agent in its own right apart from the individuals who locally make it up is necessary, we argue, not merely because it

is theoretically interesting but because it is ethnographically *and theologically* salient. Anthropologists, however, have long resisted this point. Durkheim's superorganic "group mind," as Mary Douglas once pointed out, has for a while now been "the central, repugnant paradox" for social theorists who maintain that agency is to be located in persons, not groups or institutions.⁵⁵ Yet anthropologists of Catholicism need to engage this question of group agency head on if they wish to deal with the mysterious superorganic body that Catholics view as the church—"One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic." In a theological passage of "Image and Pilgrimage," Victor and Edith Turner reflect on the concept of the church as a "communion of saints." This entity they describe as "not in principle a kin group, but a group of all those, whether kin or not, who possess the same object of belief." The church, while unified under Christ, is divided in Catholic doctrine into three dynamic parts: the Church Militant (the visible society of faithful on the earth), the Church Suffering (composed of souls in purgatory), and the Church Triumphant (composed of saints and angels in heaven). In this system, note the Turners, "Isolated prayer does not exist; every act of prayer refers to other members."⁵⁶ These three divisions, continually interconnected and forever praying and interceding on one another's behalf, combine to form a single, corporate body that bears resemblance to what anthropologists might call a "cosmic" or "social" order, a "society," or even an "ontology"—an unquestionable set of premises about the nature of being.

The importance of distinguishing between Catholicism as church, as organization, and as institution is made more complex—but also more interesting—by the fact that such terms and concepts are used extensively among clergy and theologians themselves.⁵⁷ Do "methodologically atheist" sociologists and Catholic theologians mean the same thing when they talk about the Catholic *institution*? If not, how do their usages differ? How might the different senses of the word be combined for a renewed, truly anthropological understanding of Catholicism as a complex social structure? In what follows we suggest that what we could generalize as, on the one hand, theological, and on the other, sociological, understandings of institution, while not identical, are fundamentally and inextricably linked.

In a central writing, the political philosopher Carl Schmitt elaborated on what he saw as the particularity of Roman Catholicism in contrast to Max Weber's version of Protestantism. Catholicism, Schmitt posited, is inextricable from institutional power in such a way that if we do not understand the Catholic Church as an institution, we do not understand the nature of Catholicism in the world.⁵⁸ Schmitt's assertion that "all significant concepts of the modern state are secularized theological concepts" has been worked through by philosopher Giorgio Agamben, whose particular brand of political theology reveals the richness of Catholicism, not only for our understanding of Western concepts of sovereignty and governance, but also for contemporary theorists interested in "recentering" power a generation after Michel Foucault's emphasis on the dispersal of power.⁵⁹ Agamben's claim that

politics and theology are inherent within each other—that there is no theology without some practical, political application—was foreshadowed by political and theological writings on Catholic liberation theology.⁶⁰ More recently Agamben's work has been taken up in productive ways by Chris Garces in the context of Catholic Ecuador and by Napolitano in the context of the "Atlantic Return."⁶¹ Such works suggest that reflections on the enduring interrelation of theology and politics will continue to be a promising area for the development of an anthropology of Catholicism.

Yet questions of power and politics address but one aspect of Catholicism's nature as social institution, for its institutional status stems as much from its organizational nature as it does from its theological core. Thus we are prompted to further explore the organizational and bureaucratic structures through which particular norms of action are subtly defined. The uniqueness of Catholicism's geopolitical center in Europe (the Vatican), its visible head (the pope), and its vertical, complex organizational structure must be stressed here, for in these features alone Catholicism contrasts somewhat with the horizontal thrust and comparatively decentralized organization of other religions. In the figure of the pope Catholicism differs not only from Protestant forms but also from theologically closer Orthodox Christianities. The pope condenses in his person—through the notion of his infallibility—some of the key features of the institution: its continuity, its authority (through the direct and exclusive link to the Apostle Peter), and perhaps most importantly its role as the pinnacle of human continuity with the divine.

In its concrete infrastructural manifestation, the church is a vast, articulated bureaucracy spread across the globe, internationally recognized as a state with its own legal system of canon law, independent financial holdings, and even passports.⁶² The centralization of the production of official theology and canon law in pontifical universities is part of Catholicism's epistemological constitution and governmentality, making Catholicism unique among forms of Christianity.⁶³ Such organizational features are ethnographically very interesting, yet to date anthropologists have collected very little data on them.⁶⁴ What we do know—more from historical sources, public reportage, and autobiographical accounts—is that the Catholic Church is often lived and experienced by those on the inside as a *total institution*.⁶⁵ Arguably, it was this peculiar "totalness" that moved Talal Asad to make one of the most important theoretical interventions in the modern anthropology of religion. According to Asad, drawing from Foucault, the famous Christian "inner disposition" first emerged, not from free-floating sets of meanings and symbols, but via harsh monastic disciplines that had strong physical and psychological impacts on individual subjects.⁶⁶ Such monastic disciplines were made possible because Catholicism was more than just an interlocking set of spiritual ideas: it was also an expansionary *organization*—growing fast in terms of infrastructure,

political influence, technocracy, and bureaucracy, an organization enabled then and for the subsequent two thousand years by its connection with empire.

Even today, with weakened powers of physical juridical governance, the Catholic Church continues to deliver legitimacy and protection and to control its subjects through the extraction and redistribution of material and labor resources. As a total institution it works like a “passionate machine,” continuously recalibrating its sovereignty over material and immaterial territories.⁶⁷

For priests, religious, and moral theologians working “inside” the church, the question of discipline remains, to a certain degree, unchanged. According to bodies of circulating statistics based on anonymous surveys, levels of clerical dissent on key rules such as mandatory clerical celibacy and the ordination of women are extremely high.⁶⁸ However, the existence of conscious dissent among church officeholders in particular remains somewhat theoretical, as open expression of such views in the modern church continues to carry consequences such as internal ostracism, public condemnation, bureaucratic blockage, divestment of liturgical office, and finally even excommunication.⁶⁹ The practical and economic impact on the lives of paid Catholic servants can be severe, particularly for those who lack alternative training, social capital, or professions to fall back on. Consequently, clerics frequently keep silent about their dissenting views. They may rationalize such silence in practice by invoking critical distinctions between sacred ideals and imperfect institutions; the liturgical and pastoral demands of public office and the private demands of conscience; and the name of the church as a singular, sovereign body and individual callings to particular religious orders or lay movements. The positing of such cognitive distinctions and separations, and the ability they possess to “contain” clerical dissent, could be understood as yet another element of Catholicism’s institutional flexibility.

Conflict and suppression at the church’s own center are reiterated in fractal fashion in the relation between center and periphery, or—to use Coleman’s phrasing in his essay for this book—those “ineluctable relationships between clergy and laypeople.” A key example of this operation of power can be seen in attempts to control sacred spaces and persons, both in infrastructural terms through the establishment of shrines and spiritually through processes of canonization. Histories of sainthood and shrines the world over reveal how the church as an organization reproduces itself through charismatic ruptures that cannot be wholly routinized but must nevertheless be contained. Studies of shrines and of canonizations offer interesting windows onto what sociologist Francesco Alberoni has described as “the nascent state”: sites of experimentation destined for either absorption or ejection by a dominant institution.⁷⁰ As Halemba’s study of Marian apparitions in Transcarpathia reveals, religious organizations are put in a difficult position vis-à-vis the experience of direct divine intervention. In such contexts the organization as superorganic agent cannot “simply surrender and quietly leave the scene”; rather, its officials

“go to great lengths to reclaim religious institutions and experiences that flourish outside or at the edges of their organizational borders.”⁷¹ Yet such organizational efforts are continually complicated by attitudes toward charisma itself: while some see the church merely as a “manager of” and conduit for charisma, others see charisma as a feature of a power necessarily superior to and independent from church structures.⁷²

Just as ethnographies on emergent sites of Marian apparition illuminate initial attempts between clergy and lay at negotiation—movement toward absorption—studies of canonization ceremonies can present us with the end stage of such negotiations—what we could call a kind of *beneficent cannibalization*. In Kristin Norget’s account of the beatification of the Oaxacan Martyrs, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Angeles, we see the mechanics of organizational cannibalization up close.⁷³ In the case of the Oaxacan Martyrs, all elements of indigeneity became “scripted” until the final celebration was one in which “the Otherness of that culture had been thoroughly tamed.” Norget draws our attention to the “profligate production” of saints across the Americas, particularly during the papacy of Pope John Paul II (who gave the Catholic Church more beatified martyrs and saints than all his twentieth-century predecessors combined) as a form of “emplacement”: a process of “vital mapping” in which distanced and disembedded Otherness submits to the church as “author of a univocal enunciation of indigeness.”⁷⁴

If recent years have witnessed an interesting rash of canonizations, they have also witnessed an intriguing return to official practices of exorcism. In Csordas’s contribution to this volume we see this process of absorption in 2005, with the launch of a training course for exorcists at a pontifical university in Rome, and in June 2014, with the Congregation for the Clergy’s official Vatican recognition of the International Association of Exorcists, founded in the 1990s. In this renewed field of practice, networks of doctors and scientists work to parse evil from mental illness, thus setting it squarely in Catholicism’s domain. Csordas’s work on exorcism reveals how the Catholic Church’s discourse on evil works to mediate anxieties underlying broader social transformations, crises both within the church and in the world at large. However, it also points us back, in a curious way, to an organizational mechanics of absorption, revealing how contemporary issues are continually emplaced within Catholicism’s rhetorical sphere of command.

DISCIPLINE AND TOLERANCE

In Talal Asad’s famous exegesis on the concept of religion, the emergence of the Christian self turns on the institution’s undeniable capacity to discipline and punish.⁷⁵ Yet this is only half the story. To fully comprehend the nature of the institution, we need to be equally attuned to its capacity for toleration. Catholicism’s complex organizational history is as much a history of exceptions, shortcuts, and

leniencies as it is a history of rigor and discipline.⁷⁶ Like any abstracting state machinery, Catholic institutions encompass blurred or “gray” zones whose opacity may support specific projects and actors. Indeed, we argue, this subtle combination of discipline and tolerance is the key to Catholicism’s capacity to absorb difference and opposition and thus to endure as the world’s largest religious organization.

Theologically it has been noted that the lived and imagined religious world of Catholics is often characterized by a sort of flexibility and spiritual economics very different from Protestant ideals of unmediated sincerity. This flexibility has led some scholars to characterize Catholicism as a “both/and” rather than “either/or” sort of religion.⁷⁷ Another way to describe it, as political philosopher Carl Schmitt famously did, is as a *complexio oppositorum*.⁷⁸ Some of the chapters in this volume address various aspects of Schmitt’s concept, which, at its core, describes Catholicism’s containment of different and multiple forms of life via the figure of the pope and the impersonal nature of his office as vicar of Christ, an office that rests on both divine (theological) and human (political) powers. In Schmitt’s reading the church has a unique capacity to hold any possible plurality of interests and parties because there is no other realm of life and sociality that she—the gendered pronoun used by the church—cannot embrace. As Andrea Muehlebach has argued in the context of northern Italy, the *complexio* allows us to see how an apparently “secular” ethical system may operate as a mode of Catholic governmentality, mediating broader life-worlds especially in the context of neoliberal labor regimes.⁷⁹ Whereas Muehlebach draws our attention to the encompassing (or cannibalizing) nature of the *complexio*, Andreas Bandak in his contribution to this volume draws us to it through the metaphor of a “force field.” In Bandak’s chapter on Syrian Catholicism, where Catholicism has a small but historically important presence, we see the *complexio* manifest in moral personhood fashioned through various engagements with prayer, surrender, and debt. For Bandak, Schmitt’s concept is to be understood, not as, in any way, a resolution, but rather as an animating force whose perpetual existence is generative of Catholicism, as manifest in passions and debates.

CATHOLIC PIETY AND THE QUESTION OF “BELIEF”

If the “ethical turn” within the anthropology of Christianity (and Islam) has shaped our understanding of modern religious subjectivities, it has done so primarily through uncovering the complex worlds of pious individuals, for whom the propositional content of religion *really matters*. From Saba Mahmood’s pious Islamic women to Tanya Luhrmann’s hardworking, Bible-studying evangelicals, the anthropology of religion seems of late to have taken a rather earnest turn, with an overwhelming number of studies focused on subjects whose religiosity requires exceptionally high levels of conscious, individual reflection and personal time commitment.⁸⁰ Although Catholics and indeed studies of Catholicism in this vein do

exist, it is also fairly axiomatic that Catholicism as a marker of identity is not always and everywhere primarily about “belief.” Across Brazil, for example, Protestants are commonly distinguished from Catholics by the term *crentes* (believers). Devout Catholics regularly use this term when referring to their denominational brethren in a matter-of-fact fashion, in part because no shame is perceived. To be a Catholic in Brazil today is invariably to be aware of Protestant critiques about the superiority of “sincerity” and interior belief over routinized forms of ritual and practice. Nevertheless, the fact that many Brazilian Catholics will comfortably self-identify as nonbelievers—albeit in a muted and implicit fashion, through their labeling of Protestants as the “believers”—is significant. This may be, at least in part, because in the context of contemporary Brazil, where Catholicism remains hegemonic in cultural and historical terms, even the socioeconomically poorest of Catholics continue to occupy a position of dominance. As Clara Mafra shows, working-class Pentecostals in a peripheral urban district of Rio de Janeiro continue to recognize Catholics as “distributors of modernity”: “They are the ones, ‘those up there,’ who are concerned about the transcendent and who are consequently careful to distribute modern infrastructures and practices to ‘those down here.’ Charity, favours, clientelism, and sponsorship—important points of equity in the national culture—can be traced back to Catholic principles of saintliness.”⁸¹

Mafra argues that Brazilian Pentecostals juggle two “semiotic ideologies”⁸²—“sincerity and saintliness”—the former deriving from Protestant emphasis on interiority and “belief” and the latter more associated with Catholic-inflected notions of material codependence, intercession, and redemption. This intermingling or “oscillation” of semiotic ideologies in the formation of the Brazilian Pentecostal self is indicative not only of Catholicism’s traditional alignment with Brazil’s powerful, dominant classes but also of the powerful effects of Catholicism understood not as religion but as a set of ontological assumptions about the world.

Even in “postsecular” contexts where Protestantism was culturally dominant in the past, a range of self-categorizations used by “nominal Catholics” provides an interesting reference point. In the English language, people will refer to themselves as “Catholic, but nonpracticing.” One also encounters “lapsed Catholics,” “cultural Catholics,” “ethnic Catholics,” “cradle Catholics,” and “nonobservant Catholics.” Such denotations suggest that Catholicism is open to identifications that index aspects of personhood beyond religious belief—kinship, territoriality, ethnicity, belonging—identifications that remain variously distanced, critical, and uncertain with regard to Catholicism’s key propositional content. In Coleman’s study of middle-class English visitors to Walsingham, described by him as “relatively disengaged, agnostic ‘Christians,’” accounts of pilgrimage “lack a self-consciously coherent stance to ritual or religion.” His informants’ accounts reveal Catholicism’s metonymical connection with childhood, with parental boundaries of expectation, and with memory and the circularity of time.⁸³

Following Danièle Hervieu-Léger's wider argument about the links between religion and "chains of memory," and more recent work on religion as "heritage," we might then view the new anthropology of Catholicism as offering vital insights on the connection between ritual, kinship, notions of permanence, and human engagements with mundane, worldly time.⁸⁴ Such a project, as Coleman argues, may require us to focus our ethnographic gaze "away from the most obvious centres of religious action, to look for the seemingly incoherent in religious behaviour and attitudes, to move away from core, 'hard' ritual practices and toward apparent ritual and aesthetic peripheries."⁸⁵ Indeed, we suggest that for an anthropology of Catholicism to develop, there has to be some way of better understanding the many Catholics who populate these lapsed peripheries, particularly in regions where "cultural" or "nonpracticing Catholics" make up the vast majority of Catholics. What are the ties that connect these sorts of Catholics to the center? And how do national belongings and fantasies intersect these ties?⁸⁶ How do labeling practices participate in or shift according to context, casting comparative light on religious identity as a field of debate? The challenge, as we see it, is not to assume such labels as the product of an ever-increasing tendency toward secularism but rather to scrutinize them from within Catholicism's own living forms. What allows Catholicism to encircle not only doubt and dissent but also *indifference* within its single embrace?

MEDIATION AND DEFERRAL

A clue to Catholicism's relative toleration of a degree of indifference among its flock can perhaps be found in its divine economy or *oikonomia*, its bureaucratic and legal bent, and its enshrined division of labor between clergy and lay. In its simplest terms Catholicism is ordered by a priestly caste, an ordained elite who, as David Lehmann puts it, "do the hard work" while "the followers follow."⁸⁷ In Catholicism the priesthood manifests as a form of traditional authority that dominates, as Weber described it, by "the authority of the eternal yesterday."⁸⁸ In their analytical foray on orthodox religious worlds and their particularities, Andreas Bandak and Tom Boylston offer some productive insights on this form of organization by describing it as a "community of deferral."⁸⁹ In Orthodox, Catholic, and other heavily institutional forms of Christianity the division of spiritual labor between priests, lay, and other religious virtuosi distributes the burden of piety and religious knowledge. Cultures or "communities" of deferral therefore allow some individuals to take a more passive role in relation to piety. In practice, therefore, rather than striving for absolute correctness, subjects may orient themselves toward a "lack of incorrectness" without sacrificing their claim to Christian identity.⁹⁰ The point here is not so much that in Catholicism an emphasis on ritual and a more elaborated "sensorium" fills in for an absence of *doxa* but rather that an

absence of theological certainty among individuals is acceptable. Catholicism does not exact high levels of reflexive certainty from everyone, or at least from every individual *all of the time*.

Equally important for this system to work, we note, are the ways that spiritual labor is divided and shared out among the lay themselves along axes of gender and generation. For it is here that Lehmann's depiction of priests as the "hard workers" is often inverted. In the perspective of "the lay grandmother from Calabria," for example, it is she who does the hardwork. The priest only has to perform Mass, whereas she has to attend to the souls, mouths, and stomachs of her family. He receives a comfortable wage, whereas she must perform devotional tasks and work to make ends meet.⁹¹

In this volume, the spiritual labor of lay people is exemplified in dedicated Mexican and Peruvian procession goers carrying heavy effigies, paying promises on behalf of themselves and their families.⁹² Spiritual labor is also enacted by Hillary Kaell's Canadian subjects, who, as she describes in her chapter, tend to the giant wayside crosses sprinkled throughout the Quebec countryside. In Kaell's postsecular setting, where the pull exerted by Catholicism's social hegemony or strength of presence has weakened and where the highly publicized scandals recently faced by the church have further compromised the center's moral leverage for Catholics at its margins, wayside crosses work increasingly as markers of sensible faith in the face of the loss of a stable, directive center.

Returning to Bandak and Boylston's "community of deferral," we might see lay spiritual labor as, very often, designed to form chains of mediation capable of connecting a sacred core to its runaway peripheries. Consider the role of Sara, a twenty-three-year-old pilgrim in Elaine Peña's study on transnational (Mexico-US) devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe: Sara performs pilgrimage wearing a white T-shirt covered in handwritten requests for protection from friends and relatives unable to make the journey themselves.⁹³ Consider, also Kaell's North American pilgrims to the Holy Land, whose obsessive shopping for Holy Land gifts to distribute to grandchildren is ultimately an attempt to encompass grandchildren—with or without their conscious acceptance—within an overall economy of divine materiality and spiritual salvation.⁹⁴ Both examples suggest an important role for kinship and affect and at the same time return us to an analytical concern with "collectives," "social bodies," and the endurance of institutions. Long ago Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss elaborated on the importance of mediation, in the context of sacrifice, as a technology for keeping the divine at a safe (but efficacious) distance.⁹⁵ But what else do chains of mediation achieve? If we extend our focus beyond the individual ritual of sacrifice to consider mediation across and between generations of Catholics both dead and alive, perhaps across whole communities—in the case of the patron saint, perhaps even across traditionally Catholic nation-states—we start to see Catholicism's impressive

capacity to travel through time and space.⁹⁶ As Napolitano asks in her chapter, does this allow us to open up a focus not on “religious movements” (be these reformist, charismatic, or conservative) but on the movement of the religious (as superorganic, yet immanent Catholic body) through history?

We here suggest that Catholicism’s proclivity to form chains of mediation is part of what enables it to exceed the intentionality of individuals. The fact that in Catholicism grace may be both partible and distributable through objects and persons returns us again to the Catholic notion of a communion of saints, and hence to the manner in which Catholicism (as church, as “organization” and as “institution”) is able to stretch across time and space.⁹⁷ In this conception Catholicism is better approached, not as an “official” religion crisscrossed by “folk” practices, but as a living *ecology* in the most holistic sense: that is, as an alignment of “living signs” and the individual agents who populate them. Thinking of Catholicism in such ecological terms helps us to recognize, following Douglas and Eduardo Kohn, that Catholicism is a *lived* institution and hence a “thinking self” in the sense that “representation exists in the world beyond human minds and human systems of meaning.”⁹⁸ To speak of a Catholic ecology is not, we should clarify, to misrecognize the capacity of any ecology to produce destructive and exploitative patterns. Catholic ecologies are historically layered and have politicized and financial forms even as they display elements of “flow” and “mutuality” with their physical environments.

GENDER

If “folk” divisions of spiritual labor in Catholic cultures were well documented in early accounts of Catholic communities, the gendered and political salience of such divisions was underanalyzed. In earlier ethnographies of the Mediterranean in particular, lay virtuosi were present through the stereotype of the “black clad, rosary telling women.”⁹⁹ As Cannell notes, the women in such ethnographies were mainly disregarded by this earlier generation of ethnographers as “those to whom society has assigned the role of appeasing the church by a demonstration of orthodox religious observance.” Men, by contrast, were more interesting subjects for study, given their supposed “cultural autonomy” manifest, partly, through “flamboyant anticlericalism.”¹⁰⁰ A lesson can be learned from ethnographers of Greek Orthodoxy who offered something of a corrective to this view by juxtaposing the sociopolitical marginality of Greek women against the formidable affective force of their ritualized performances.¹⁰¹ Nadia Seremetakis’s impressive work on the women’s work of lament revealed the scope for social commentary and critique embedded in Catholic and Orthodox forms of “elaborated suffering.”¹⁰² More recently Napolitano has drawn our attention to the complex tension that besets

Latin American women migrants' devotional labor for their European Catholic hosts.¹⁰³ On the whole, however, few key texts within the more recent anthropology of Christianity have focused on the question of gender, and those studies that have addressed gender directly have mostly been authored by women.¹⁰⁴ Thus it would seem that women scholars of Christianity have generally been left to tackle the "the gender question" in much the same way that Catholic women are left to clean church buildings once mass is over and the priest has left.

In the seminal work of William A. Christian, Catholic practices of dividing up spiritual labor are analyzed through the lenses of gender and life course. Christian observes that as a woman of the Spanish valley ages, the colors she wears become more muted until, finally, in widowhood she "abandons the last remnants of light" and wears black, "not unlike the cassock of a priest."¹⁰⁵ For Mayblin this movement of Catholic religiosity within and across not merely the social or collective body but the individual gendered body *over the life course* is significant, for it links to a central logic undergirding Catholic conceptions of the divine as sexually ambiguous.¹⁰⁶ In Mayblin's thesis, definitions of masculinity, femininity, and their attendant erotic associations "become blurred the holier a body becomes." This "blurring," manifest so often in hagiographic accounts and popular discourse on saints, is refracted again in the asexuality of the worldly celibate priest, and then again in the aging and/or sexually ambiguous bodies of lay virtuosi.¹⁰⁷ Hence we see how, particularly in rural, traditional "folk" Catholic communities, lay people's devotional activities increase as their bodies grow more distant from the phase of sexual reproduction. As Christian intimates, older virtuosi become, in a rather practical and mundane sense, freer for the channeling of grace in their lives. Relationally they become more like celibate priests: more available to God, the saints, and the souls surrounding them.¹⁰⁸

The gendered division of spiritual labor in Catholicism remains, we argue, a key issue for the future anthropology of Catholicism. Interestingly it was made explicit especially in Pope Leon's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and was developed further in the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). However, the stakes of this division, tied as they are to power, prestige, and political visibility/invisibility of office, are reaching an apotheosis in debates surrounding the ordination of women. In Part One's excerpt from Caroline Walker Bynum we see how for thirteenth-century female mystics ecstasy or possession served as an alternative to the authority of priestly office. The visions that women received at Mass, most notably Eucharistic visions, writes Bynum, "occasionally projected women, in metaphor and vision, into access to the altar, even into the role of celebrant—things strictly forbidden to them." These medieval women's aspirations were to a certain extent curtailed and circumscribed, not just by the church, but by the wider social environment of patriarchal gender norms in which they were situated. While the church's stance on gender has changed little over the subsequent millennium, the wider social

environment most clearly has, a shift evident in Mayblin's chapter for this volume on the Roman Catholic Women Priest movement. Here we see how the paradoxes surrounding the interdiction on women's ordination refract through shifts in discursive register, silently shadowing the current crisis concerning sexual abuse in the priesthood. This complex crisis, argues Mayblin, is unique inasmuch as it exceeds any one particular locality, constituting a crisis of diffusely globalized and even secular proportions.

BODIES AND MATTERS FOR A NEW ANTHROPOLOGY OF CATHOLICISM

Mediation is one of anthropology's current leitmotifs, a window for examining cultural production and reproduction within globalization as these are shaped especially by new media technologies. Many of the ethnographies featured in this book return us to the critical theme of mediation, in some ways hardly surprising given Catholicism's sacramental vision, in which material things (water, oil, medallions, images, flower blossoms, relics, etc.) and human/divine beings (Christ, the Virgin, the saints) are channels and sources of God's grace. The analogical imagination of Catholicism thus inheres in metaphors and metonyms of fleshiness/carnality, blood, passion, and their sublimated undersides that ebb, flow, and circulate in fascinating ways. The doctrines of the Incarnation (from the Latin: *in + caro*, flesh: *incarnare*, to make flesh), in which Jesus Christ, assuming human flesh, body and soul, unites divine nature with human nature, and transubstantiation (which presupposes the "realness" of the transformation of blood and body into wine and wafer) index a view where invisible *mysterium* and material *tremendum* unite. In Jon Mitchell's chapter we return to the doctrine of the Incarnation via his discussion of the Catholic body. Mitchell's discussion argues for the persistence, in modern Catholicism, of "porous" selves for whom the boundaries between natural and supernatural, material and immaterial, body and soul are indistinct. Such an idea, he stresses, is hardly "archaic" but demonstrative of a "modernity" that, *contra* Weber, does not eschew enchantment.

While several of the contributions to this book draw upon Catholicism's proclivity for certain forms and aesthetic formations, the chapter by Norget provides insight on the potential vitality and political leverage to be wrought by Catholic institutions through "baroque" frameworkings. If there is a tendency to think about Christianity as a coherent system of meanings and ideas capable of transcending local variations of culture, Norget presents us with the interesting possibility that there might be something inherently transcendent—something inherently *Christian* even—in Catholic forms of the baroque. An anthropology of Catholicism here challenges us to consider certain aesthetic forms, not merely as a happenstance worldly vehicle for "Christianity" (here understood as a prescribed

set of abstract ideals) to inhabit, but as intrinsically Christian in their own right. The chaos, contradiction, and inherent excess of the baroque are not merely indicative of a certain period's aesthetic sensibility; as Norget points out, the baroque also works as sort of transhistoric mobile *theological architecture*.

If material culture, in its mobility and portability, is an important way in which institutions reproduce themselves across time and space, no object is perhaps more emblematic of this for Catholicism than the humble rosary. Ellen Badone's contribution, based on research at a French shrine in Brittany, probes deeply into the phenomenology of Rosary recitation to reveal both its meditative *and* its mediative aspects. Notable here is what Badone describes as a more encompassing "Catholic spirit of death." This is not a horrific, sterile death but a fertile one, with the principal imaginal referent being the passion and death of Christ. Badone's contribution, like the essay for this volume by medieval historian Niklaus Largier, demonstrates the importance of the *longue durée* perspective for understanding Catholicism's sensory forms. Catholic anthropology rooted in the medieval age, Largier shows us, was not dependent on romantic or modernist notions of a nature that enables the subject's cultivation of an inner religious imaginary. Instead, medieval practices of prayer, contemplation, and a poetics of sensation participated in the creation of a "theater for the soul," thus inverting the usual commonsense understanding of our senses as mediating our encounter with the outside world. Largier's historical phenomenology inspires a much-needed reengagement with questions of mediation, experience, and modes and substances of embodied belonging that are central themes in the development of the anthropology of Catholicism.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, if there is an important challenge for an emerging anthropology it will be, as Michelle Molina warns us, not to make Catholicism part of a "just-so story" in which Catholic materiality "triumphantly resists the Western colonial legacy while simultaneously dethroning Protestant theology's dominion over religious studies terms and concepts."¹¹⁰ Just as Protestant Calvinists are not the only Christians in the world to stress "interior belief," the work of scholars like Birgit Meyer on African Pentecostalism amply shows that Roman Catholics are not the only materialist Christians in the world.¹¹¹ Indeed, as Meyer stresses in her essay for this book, the neatness of the imagined Protestant/Catholic dualism in terms of mentalist/materialist religiosity rarely translates in terms of everyday practice. Rather, "These dualisms could be seen as the poles of a continuum that includes Protestant *and* Catholic religiosities."

The popular stereotype of Catholicism as Protestantism's nonascetic cousin is interesting inasmuch as it points us back to the Cartesian dualisms of Western thought.¹¹² The point here is not to rail against Cartesianism, for as a "native philosophy" and as a hermeneutic it has a role, but to remind ourselves that Catholicism's relationship with candles and ritual sensoria is much debated among Catholics themselves and periodically subjected to reform. In *Natural Symbols* Douglas

tackled just this theme through an analysis of the clerical rejection of Friday abstinence. “Thus was the old ritual abolished,” she writes. “Friday no longer rings the great cosmic symbols of expiation and atonement: it is not symbolic at all, but a practical day for the organization of charity.”¹¹³ Douglas’s *Natural Symbols* could be read, on some level, as a personal reaction to the iconoclastic wave that swept through her church in the 1970s, following Vatican II.¹¹⁴ Indeed, it was in this same period that Stanley Brandes conducted research in the Spanish village of Becedas, where similar abolishments were under way. In the excerpt included in Part One, we encounter the religious sensorium of Becedas villagers in a phase of diminishment, its traditional cycle of rituals in steep decline. For Brandes, such changes were the result of the Vatican’s continuing attempt to adapt the church to contemporary needs and conditions “to make religion more comprehensible to the ordinary believer, to divest Catholicism of much of its mystery and mysticism.” Douglas would doubtless have agreed with the Becedas villagers that the eradication of ritual represented a destruction of what Brandes calls “the eternal verities of religious action.”

ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THIS VOLUME

The essays gathered in this volume consider the above themes in ways that we consider critical to the construction of a new anthropology of Catholicism. The classic works of Part One are designed to give the reader a sense of Catholicism’s important presence in the ethnographic canon that preceded the “anthropology of Christianity” as it later became known. While the selection of these works is far from exhaustive, we hope it will go some way toward tracing out an alternative genealogy for the field and setting the stage for the theoretical and ethnographic engagements in Part Two. The Part One excerpts are presented chronologically not by date of publication but in order of the period in which the author began working as an anthropologist. Each excerpt is prefaced by a short introduction locating it within the wider anthropology of Catholicism. In Part Two we have gathered works that we consider exemplary of a new wave of ethnography on Catholicism—a wave inspired in part by the discipline’s efflorescent theoretical interest in Christianity’s forms but also by increasing desire on the part of anthropologists of Christianity to enter into dialogue with scholars of neighboring disciplines whose thought-provoking works on Catholicism provide continual inspiration. While most of the essays in this section are by anthropologists, we also include contributions by nonanthropologists, reflecting the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to Catholicism’s *longue durée*. Finally, Part Three features five established scholars, Simon Coleman, Birgit Meyer, Niklaus Largier, Thomas Csordas, and Robert Orsi, whose “thought-pieces” set out to identify issues and challenges for an anthropology of Catholicism today.

This book then takes up Greeley's project of elucidating a specifically "Catholic imagination" but in a way that goes well beyond the theological gates. To elaborate the "Catholic imagination," as we hope to have shown in this introduction, is not to reduce Catholicism to a simple structure that is the same everywhere, but rather to engage with the ways certain principles—of continuity and universality, of affect and authority, of tolerance and diversity—ripple and refract across space, across time, across bodies and relationships. Such a project, we suggest, offers insights not just into the institution of Catholicism and the diverse groups of people of which it is composed but also into the anthropology of religion more generally.

NOTES

1. Greeley (2001, 1–2).
2. Greeley (2001, 7).
3. See Robbins (2014) for reflections on the anthropology of Christianity as a conscious theoretical project.
4. Cannell (2006, introduction).
5. For more on the importance of Catholicism to the Oxford School of anthropologists, see Al-Shahi (1999); Larsen (2014); Fardon (1999).
6. Pitt-Rivers ([1992] 2011).
7. Hann and Goltz (2010, 5).
8. Douglas (1986).
9. Cannell (2006); Robbins (2010).
10. For example, Burdick (1998).
11. Robbins (2007); Meyer (1999); Engelke (2004); Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins (2008).
12. Robbins (2007, 10).
13. For discussion on "rupture," see Engelke and Robbins (2010) and Badiou (2003).
14. Bialecki (2014), quoted in Robbins (2014, s163).
15. Since the first female ordinations in 2002, some three hundred women across the world have been ordained as deacons and priests, and approximately twelve have been made bishops. Although Roman Catholic women priests exist in Columbia, South Africa, and even Taiwan, numbers have been growing most in North America and western Europe. For more information, see the website of Roman Catholic Womenpriests at <http://romancatholicwomenpriests.org>.
16. See Bialecki (2014) for a discussion of denominational evolution.
17. See Certeau (1986) for inspiration on the *longue durée* as an analytical angle.
18. On Catholicism as a "transversal institution," see De la Torre (2002).
19. See Barker (2014), who argues that studying institutional configurations provides anthropologists a strategic point to consider local versions of Christianity as both "One and Many."
20. See Mayblin (2014a) for an elaboration of the inherent "gymnasticity" of Catholic semiotic form, particularly in relation to the gendered body.
21. For an excellent anthropological dissection of the term *syncretism*, its etymology, and the history of its application, see Shaw and Stewart (1994). Their discussion pivots on the difficulty many anthropologists have had embracing a term that has acquired—in some quarters—pejorative meanings. They point out that problems with syncretism from an anthropological point of view at least do not lie with any substantive objections to the semantics of the term, "since hardly anyone would deny that different religious traditions have amalgamated in the past and continue to interact and borrow from one another today" (3); rather, they lie with the word itself and its history of application, which

took a particularly negative turn in the nineteenth century when religious scholars used it to signal “disorder,” “confusion,” and reduction to a “lowest common denominator.” Like Shaw and Stewart, we acknowledge that “syncretism” is a historically constituted concept that comes with certain political baggage that scholars should be aware of. Nevertheless, the concept remains semantically useful in the context of Catholicism as a religion whose own forms are themselves inherently plastic.

22. See, for example, Díaz Balsera (2005); von Vacano (2012); Mignolo (2002, 2011).
23. For example, Angrosino (1994); Cannell (1999); Chua (2012); Orta (2004, 2006).
24. See Mosse (2012) and his chapter in this volume.
25. On South Indian Catholicism and “syncretism,” see also Henn (2014).
26. Lado (2006).
27. Norget (2009, 342).
28. Norget (2009, 342).
29. See Pope Alexander VI, 1943, *Inter Caetera*, which validated the possession of the kingdoms of Portugal and Castile in the Americas. Repeated requests have been made to the Holy See to refute such a bull, to no avail yet: Apache-Ndé-Nneé Working Group (2015).
30. Napolitano (2016, 125).
31. D. Lehmann (1999).
32. Tomlinson and Engelke (2006, 16).
33. Chua (2012, 143).
34. Chua (2012, 143).
35. Orta (2004, 2006).
36. Orta (2006, 180).
37. De Martino ([1961] 2005).
38. Brettell (1990).
39. Pina-Cabral (1986, 131).
40. On charitable accommodation, see Davidson ([1984] 2001).
41. Keane (2010).
42. Shaw and Stewart (1994, 21).
43. In this analytical understanding, syncretism opens up political questions around forms of living and “living in common.” For an interesting take, see Roland Barthes (2012, 48), who argues for a “third way” of living together, one that is neither dyadically exclusive, not alienatingly distant. See also Giorgio Agamben’s (2013, 58) discussion of the Catholic life of cenoby—lived medieval rhythms that unfolded without any shared telos or common goal. Agamben argues that certain cenobitic forms of living emerged in the spatio-temporal tension between life and precepts. Neither of these latter two exist prior to each other, but they acquire a meaning through particular forms of living.
44. See, for example, Hall (1997); Orsi (1996, 1985).
45. A “two-tiered” model religion, made up of discrete spheres known as “great” and “little,” was first elaborated by Redfield (1956). The model was later critiqued by writers such as Brown (1981) and Christian (1981), who argued that it perpetuated the misconception that the spheres were disconnected from one another or else characterized by a downward percolation of concepts from “great” to “little.” For an excellent summary and in relation to synonymous terms such as *popular*, *folk*, and *informal religion*, see Badone (1990, 3–8). Going beyond received notions of “lived religion,” as Napolitano (2016, 178–79) and Jacqueline Rose (1998, 3) remind us, also requires attention to “unlived” fantasies—those wishful or unconscious acts that remain unacted upon.
46. See Davie (1994); Day (2006); Lindsay and Gallup (1999); Vincett and Woodhead (2009).
47. An important example of this trend can be found in contemporary mainstream cognitive and psychological studies of religion. See, for example, Luhrmann (2012).
48. Hann (2014, 183).
49. See Hann (2012).

50. Barker (2014, 5179).
51. Halemba (2015, 9).
52. Halemba (2015, 9).
53. Halemba (2015, 10).
54. Quote from Durão and Lopes (2011, 364).
55. Douglas (1986, 15–16).
56. Turner and Turner (1978, 159).
57. Theological treatises on the nature of religious institution are numerous. Many proceed by investigating the supposed dialectic of opposing principles such as institution/charisma, Christology/pneumatology, and hierarchy/prophecy. In an essay titled “Ecclesial Movements and Their Place in Theology,” Ratzinger (2007) dissolves such binaries, arguing that the church is not constituted dialectically, as some sociologists would suggest, but organically. The priesthood, he argues, is not a bureaucratic adaptation or an “office” so much as a “divine gift.” The apostolic succession is not a move away from charisma but, on the contrary, a total dependence on the spirit. For interesting sociological discussions of this theology, see, for example, Stark (1965) and Thorsen (2015).
58. Schmitt ([1923] 1996); Weber ([1905] 2001).
59. Agamben (1998); Hansen and Stepputat (2006).
60. The classic theological work of liberation theology is Gutierrez ([1971] 1973). Well-known political science perspectives, which have dominated social scientific literature on the movement, can be found in Berryman (1987) and Levine (1992). Anthropological analyses on liberation theology include Lancaster (1988) and Norget (2004).
61. Garces (2010); Napolitano (forthcoming).
62. In 1964 the Holy See acquired status as a permanent “observer state” at the United Nations. Through its choice to remain an “observer state” rather than a full-fledged member state, it has been able to exert a different type of influence in decisions made by the UN Assembly—such as spearheading important motions like a world ban on the death penalty.
63. For key work on the formation and reproduction of governmentality, see Foucault (1997), T. Mitchell (2002), and N. Rose (1998).
64. Some anthropological exceptions include Irvine (2010); Lester (2005); and Corwin (2012). For a social history of the cloister, see Rapley ([2001] 2009); for a vivid autobiographical account, see Armstrong (1997).
65. Erving Goffman (1961, 17) defined total institutions as “social establishments” of the most “encompassing” type: “A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an over-all rational plan. The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life.”
66. Foucault (1993); Asad (1993).
67. On the Church as “passionate machine,” see Napolitano (2016).
68. Pew Research Center (2015).
69. For an autobiographical account of excommunication from clerical orders see, for example, Loisy (1924); for a more recent theologian’s experience, see, for example, Curran (2006).
70. Alberoni (1984).
71. Cf. Christian (2012).
72. Halemba (2015, 274–75).
73. For an interesting Uganda case, see Behrend (2011).
74. Norget (2009, 348–49).
75. Asad (1993).
76. Mayblin (n.d.).
77. Tracy (1981).

78. Schmitt ([1923] 1996); see also Marder (2008) for a detailed discussion.
79. Muehlebach (2009).
80. See Luhrmann (2012); Mahmood (2005).
81. Mafra (2011, 456).
82. On the nature of “semiotic ideology,” see Keane (2007).
83. Coleman (2014, 287).
84. On the concept of “chains of memory,” see Hervieu-Léger (2000). Hervieu-Léger emphasizes how religion is partly constituted precisely through the process of the transmission of its tradition in time. An elaboration of the idea of “religion as heritage,” which sees religion even in “secular” societies as visible and recognizable because of its character as a national heritage or tradition, may be found in Hervieu-Léger (2008).
85. Coleman (2014, 290).
86. For affective dispositions and national fantasies nested within Catholicism, see Bandak (2013) and Napolitano (2009).
87. D. Lehmann (2013, 658).
88. Weber ([1948] 1998); see also C. Taylor (2007), who discusses the historical legacy of this religious division of labor for the development of the secular.
89. Bandak and Boylston (2014).
90. Bandak and Boylston (2014).
91. Diego Malara, personal communication, January 2015.
92. For example in Napolitano’s and Norget’s chapters in this volume.
93. Peña (2011).
94. Kaell (2012).
95. Hubert and Mauss ([1964] 1981).
96. On Catholicism as transnational and encompassing, see Casanova (1997).
97. See Mayblin’s chapter in this volume for a discussion of grace as partible yet “barrier sensitive.”
98. Douglas (1986); Kohn (2013); quote from Kohn (2013, 31).
99. Cannell (2006, 9).
100. Cannell (2006, 9).
101. See Caravelli (1980); Cowan (1990); Dubisch (1995); Du Boulay (1974); Seremetakis (1991).
102. Seremetakis (1991). For discussion of “elaborated suffering” as moral work, see Mayblin (2010).
103. Napolitano (forthcoming).
104. For example, Brusco (2010); Drogus (1997); Eriksen (2008, 2012, 2014); Martin (2009); Mayblin (2010, 2014a).
105. Christian ([1972] 1989, 161).
106. Mayblin (2014a).
107. Mayblin (2014a, 278).
108. Christian ([1972] 1989).
109. For recent discussions by anthropologists of Catholicism and the body, see Blanes and Fedele (2011); Egan (2011); Bacchiddu (2011); Ballacchino (2011).
110. Hughes (2012, 16).
111. See Meyer (2004).
112. See also Engelke’s (2007) discussion of matter in Christianity as “the problem of presence.”
113. Douglas (1970, 47).
114. See Fardon (2013).