

# 1 Introduction: Catholic Ideology

By the 1960s, American Catholics had become part of the American mainstream. They had made it. While it is true that there was, and remains, great variety in the experiences and lifestyles of American Catholics, anti-Catholic prejudice had greatly receded, Catholics had made enough socio-economic gains that they no longer looked very different from other Americans, and one of their own had even been elected president.

But the Catholic Church as an institution did not simply blend into the mainstream. Especially to non-Catholics, the opinions of institutional representatives and personnel of the Catholic Church could appear strikingly provocative and, in many eyes, extreme.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Church did not become a complacent institution, internally content with its successes and ready to adulate the American dream.

Instead, American sisters (commonly known as nuns) rebelled against patriarchal authority within the Church; American bishops became vocal critics of U.S. government policies and occasionally clashed with the Vatican. But had not sisters voluntarily taken a vow of obedience? Why such tumult precisely when the Catholic Church seemed to be stronger than ever? And had not bishops been good American patriots for two centuries? Why would they become such “leftists” just as their laity had finally escaped poverty and discrimination and had begun an apparent ideological shift to the right? A cursory glance at history—at Iberian colonialism in the Americas, at the French Revolution—suggests that the bishops’ opinions did not appear to be very “Catholic.” Did not the Church internationally have a long history of alliance with conservative elites and governments?

Perhaps the most immediately sensible explanation is that put forward by Catholics labeled “traditionalists” or “conservatives”: the decline of traditional deference to the central, spiritual authority of Rome has allowed

divergent groups to import ideas from outside the Church and thus Balkanize and politicize Catholicism. (Some critics, however, even say that Rome's social and political views have become tainted.) Feminism, the peace movement, socialism, Protestantism—these are among the apparent sources of alien ideas.<sup>2</sup> An overly radical interpretation of Vatican II (1962–1965) was the beginning of a completely different Church;<sup>3</sup> or, as the followers of French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre would argue,<sup>4</sup> Vatican II itself was the problem, for it turned away from true Catholicism in favor of secular ideals. Even supporters of the new directions of Catholicism would agree with much of this description, if phrased in a more positive light: the Church has boldly and bravely entered the modern world, secure enough in its own message to leave its ethnic ghetto and to champion pluralism and the rights of the oppressed.

There is a shade of truth in most of these descriptions, save for one: as I will demonstrate in the following pages, it is historically and sociologically inaccurate to argue that the politicization of the Church is without precedent and that reform-minded and politicized Catholics developed their concerns simply by absorbing non-Catholic ideologies. (By “ideologies,” I mean belief systems with implications for social interaction.)<sup>5</sup> There has been some borrowing, but the borrowing has been as much a result as a cause of political and ideological processes internal to the Church. Although it is not the sociologist's place to judge what doctrinally qualifies as Catholicism, historically it is quite clear that Rome, Catholic conservatives, Catholic socialists, and Catholic feminists all inherit a truly Catholic legacy. They emphasize different aspects of that legacy, but because the legacy is multifaceted and partly ambiguous, they all can point to true historical precedents for their beliefs.

Without an appropriate sociological and historical perspective, we can misunderstand the context of current ideological and political change within the Catholic Church. First, we might not realize that even a century ago (and perhaps especially a century ago), it was not true that concerns with spirituality and papal supremacy were divorced from concerns with temporal politics. Second, we might not see that many of the perspectives now labeled as alien to Catholicism continue to be framed within peculiarly Catholic worldviews; in some cases, such supposedly alien perspectives actually appeared within the Church before they were popular in the secular world. For example, feminist challenges among American sisters appeared too early to be considered the products of contemporary secular feminism. And we cannot understand American bishops' “leftist” positions on economic and nuclear policy without understanding the very Catholic

nature of their perspective and the origins of their interests in such issues in internal processes of Church politics.

In fact, once we understand the variety of past precedents as well as the current potential volatility within Catholicism itself, we can begin to answer a question that has puzzled so many observers of the Church: why can representatives of the Church, even popes and bishops, appear at times so clearly to be on the left side of the political spectrum and at other times—when it comes to such issues as abortion or sexual orientation—so clearly on the right? The most common resolution of this paradox is to treat the left and right opinions as completely separate, with separate origins. There is a kernel of truth to this resolution, but it is only a half-truth and thus can be extremely misleading. In fact, although Catholicism’s “left” and “right,” to a great extent, concern different types of issues with different historical importance to the Church, the “left” is not complete, and not understandable, except in relation to the “right.” Indeed, one of the major topics of this book is the process by which the Catholic hierarchy of the last century defined issues of “faith and morals,” on the one hand, and issues of politics and social problems, on the other, by attempting to distinguish the two types of issues *in relation to each other*. We can understand much of the change in Catholic ideology of the last century by analyzing the hierarchy’s (not fully successful) attempt to separate issues of “faith and morals,” where the institutional Church appears to be conservative, from social and political issues, where the Church sometimes even appears to be on the radical left.

The categories of right and left politics are taken from secular analyses. In fact, the political labels of “left” and “right” began as references to the seating patterns of political blocs in continental European legislatures (originally in the National Assembly of the French Revolution) of the last two centuries—the more reform-minded blocs customarily sat to the left.<sup>6</sup> But the political changes of revolution and republicanism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe commonly included hostility toward Church influence in politics. It is, therefore, not surprising that conceptual categories that originated among the Church’s antagonists do not correspond to those of Catholic ideology. It is legitimate to ask what implications Catholic ideology might have for secular politics. But to understand the origins and dynamics of Catholic ideology itself, we cannot begin by classifying its components according to such categories as “left” or “right,” as if Catholicism were just another secular party platform. It is true that we have to look at the politics of Catholic ideology, but much of the relevant “politics” is internal to the Church and does not reflect secular debates.

For popes and bishops understand the world through a perspective learned and developed within the Church. The more the lives of individual Catholics are encompassed by participation in the Church, the more important will Catholic perspectives be to their ideology. Indeed, this book argues that we can understand ideological change only by understanding the subtleties of the specific, relevant social structures within which ideologies develop.

As Catholics reflect and argue about the implications of their faith, they talk with each other, they negotiate with each other, they challenge each other. Sometimes their focus and their challenges also involve forces outside the Church, for example, modern states. Not surprisingly, in the case of conflict, powerful organizations and persons are often able to suppress the ideas and challenges of others.

The chapters that follow are an analysis of how various groups within the Catholic Church have developed different ideological positions depending on how much and what type of power they have within the Church. The title's reference to Catholicism's "frontiers" refers not only to the new paths that many Catholics have forged, but also to the internal and external boundaries that define the politics of contemporary Catholicism. Central to the analysis is the Catholic hierarchy's particular way of distinguishing its own authority from secular authority and the ideological and political boundaries that many groups within the Church attempt to draw so as to define their distinctive identities and their religious priorities.

The U.S. Church is the primary case study, but it is not really possible to understand the U.S. Church without first understanding the ideological and political inheritance that the U.S. Church receives from the international Church. That is, the most powerful persons in the Church will have the greatest ability to structure Catholic ideology, and so it is essential to begin with the papacy, which is the subject of chapter 2. In the nineteenth-century, the papacy lost a political battle with European liberalism that forced Rome to restructure its ideological priorities. (I refer here to *classical liberalism*.)<sup>7</sup> To avoid persistent conflict, Rome, although quite resistant at first, eventually abandoned its insistence that Catholicism have a special, legally enforced political status within European society. Thus a new boundary between church and state emerged.

Nevertheless, the papacy's adjustment to a changing social and political landscape in Europe was neither rapid nor without complications. Such an adjustment had implications for the distribution of authority within the Church; for example, several European states had traditionally been quite involved in determining the makeup of the Church's hierarchy, but liberal states generally abandoned such direct interference. Somewhat suddenly,

the papacy had more internal institutional control, but over a more restricted set of issues. The rest of the book concerns the difficulties and opportunities that emerged within the context of this political and ideological reconstruction. Some of these complications, examined in the discussion of Vatican II in chapter 3, were inherent in Rome's ambiguous, hesitant approach to a restructuring it had not originally welcomed. But problems also emerged as the traditions of different national Churches either reinforced or clashed with the newly emerging boundary between church and state as well as the new distribution of institutional power.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 follow the ideological history of the U.S. Catholic Church. Chapter 4 describes the somewhat special social context of the American Church; as a minority church experiencing discrimination, it had long been more receptive than Rome to a liberal approach to church-state issues. Thus American bishops, the topic of chapter 5, welcomed Rome's ideological reconstruction. But the attempt by Rome to centralize institutional authority as well as the changing place of the Catholic Church in twentieth-century America led to new tensions between Rome and American Catholicism as well as between American Catholicism and U.S. secular society. The church-state boundary remains today a contentious issue not only within Catholic doctrine, but within American society.

Chapter 6 is a detailed analysis of the ideological transformation of a group excluded from the center of institutional power, namely, American sisters. American sisters, with a quite different set of priorities than the bishops, are an excellent example of the power of the powerless to turn their exclusion into the asset of autonomy. But they also demonstrate the costs of exclusion.

Chapter 7, an overview of ideological changes in Latin American Catholicism, brings into focus the comparative differences among national Churches with different histories of church-state relations and internal institutional politics. The book then concludes with a discussion of the implications of this analysis for the general study of ideological change as well as a discussion of ideological trends we might expect in the future of the Catholic Church.

## *Social Structures and Ideologies*

### SOCIAL STRUCTURES

This book, then, attempts to explain a perplexing pattern of ideological change within the Catholic Church, focusing on the specific, relevant social structures within which a particular ideology has developed. The discussion

so far should be sufficient to provide a general sense of the argument. But a complete understanding of why struggles within the Church take a particular shape requires a full theoretical discussion of the sociology and politics of ideology. The casual reader interested, for example, more in the history of Catholicism than in the validity of the sociological argument could probably skip this section and still understand most of the book. But explaining exactly what I mean by “relevant social structures within which an ideology develops” requires a greater level of conceptual sophistication.

By “structures,” I mean impersonal organizational and social patterns that constrain our freedom of movement. It is not altogether unreasonable that nonsociologists would, at first, feel an irresistible urge to flee from jargon about social structures. But the concept is a useful one and not as abstract as it first seems: a structure is much like a building. In our social life, we are constantly constructing and altering patterns much like we construct buildings; while they stand, these patterns, like buildings, have a certain permanence and to some degree are more solid than are those who built them.

A building is not alive, and so its relation to us is impersonal, although much life takes place within it. It constrains us, for we cannot walk through bricks and walls. But it also allows us to do things that we could not have easily done otherwise:<sup>8</sup> it gives us a place to interact with others, and it helps us conduct and organize our lives (our work lives in an office building or home lives in an apartment building). And even though it constrains and, to some extent, organizes, our lives and is impersonal, people planned it and built it. Of course, it may not always work the way we intended; perhaps we did not anticipate some design problems. Or perhaps we were forced for various reasons to live or work in a building designed for someone else’s needs (e.g., a landlord’s need to keep costs down), so the building is a constant source of frustration. Buildings can have weak points as well, where there may be danger of collapse. In some cases, we can alter the building, but usually only in cooperation with others and often at great expense.

We create, use, and are constrained by social structures in much the same way. Social life has patterns; it depends on social organization. People create those patterns and organization, but the structures are impersonal to the extent that those patterns take on a life of their own, and challenging them involves costs. Thus to take an everyday trivial example: although Americans could certainly have developed their habits and planned their roads so that they drove on the left rather than the right, this social convention could not now easily be changed.<sup>9</sup> Our road signs and some exits and entrances (e.g., for parking garages or jug-handle turns) are

designed for driving on the right, and we are used to it; millions of people participate in, and thus re-create, this convention every day. While those who do not drive are less affected, individual drivers have to organize their habits in some mutually compatible way, and driving on the right is a fundamental part of that organization. An individual American could, of course, drive on the left. At best, however, she will end up with a ticket; at worst, she will have a horrible collision. A city could have a little more success challenging this convention but would have trouble controlling patterns outside the city borders; the U.S. government could have even greater success (although it would still face the problem of those roads that connect to Canada and Mexico; it is no accident that driving on the left is associated with *island* nations). Even if the U.S. government opted for driving on the left, however, there would be enormous obstacles: the need to rebuild many exits and entrances and to change thousands or millions of road signs, street maps, and driving manuals; the facts of (at least temporary) chaos, resentment, and resistance; and so on. Driving on the right is, then, a social pattern that impersonally structures our lives, partly via our collective, everyday participation, and partly via its material manifestations (e.g., in road signs; not all social structures, however, have tangible manifestations). Visitors from Ireland or Britain or Australia may find this pattern frustrating, but they have little choice but to conform.

Notice, in this example, that American driving patterns affect different people differently. They have different relevance and meaning for American drivers, American nondrivers, and non-Americans. In general, indeed, different people experience, and participate in, social structures differently.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND POWER

Ultimately, I argue, different aspects of power, broadly conceived, most determine how people differentially experience and participate in social structures.<sup>10</sup> There are varying ways this is true. Let us begin with a simple one: most individuals have essentially no power to alter social patterns of driving, while high government officials have considerably more. Barriers to changing laws, or even social conventions, are greater obstacles to the average citizen than they are to the president.

To extend this example, we must first ask a simple question: what *is* power? A standard sociological definition of power comes from Max Weber: power is the high “probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.”<sup>11</sup> In this definition, then, power is the ability, if necessary, to enforce one’s will. But as Peter

Bachrach and Morton Baratz as well as Steven Lukes have pointed out,<sup>12</sup> sometimes power includes preventing resistance to begin with. Power, then, includes the ability to control the agenda and prevent undesirable issues or problems (e.g., resistance) from arising in the first place.

What, then, are the *sources* of power? I argue that there are basically two sources. One is *resources*, which can include money, weapons, effective supporting organizations (e.g., a bureaucracy or party)—anything that can be used to make oneself a decision-maker (i.e., outcompete others) or to pressure other decision-makers. A second source of power is *autonomy*—that is, the state of being unaffected by the actions or decisions of others.

To some extent, people with large amounts of resources are by definition autonomous of the structural conditions that constrain others.<sup>13</sup> In this way, autonomy is very much a positive source of power: one can change the patterns that constrain others and thus re-form, reduce, or increase the social constraints others face.

But autonomy can often be more a negative source of power over only a limited portion of one's own life; it can involve freedom from constraints without any corresponding ability to change the constraints that govern the lives of other people. Thus nondrivers are relatively unconstrained by the American pattern of driving or by *any* pattern of driving. They need know only where to look for oncoming cars and what side of the street to catch the bus. Because they are free of a constraint relevant to the lives of others, we can say that in that aspect of their lives—even if a trivial one—they do have more autonomy, and thus some small amount of power over their lives, that drivers do not. (Remember, this is true only in a limited, negative sense; whether they have more autonomy in their lives as a whole is a different question.) But they hardly have much ability to change the patterns that govern American driving as a whole; their autonomy is thus of a different sort than the autonomy that the U.S. government has vis-à-vis those patterns.<sup>14</sup>

These two faces of autonomy have interesting implications for the ways that power shapes how people experience, and participate in, particular social structures. To the extent that a particular social structure is irrelevant to one's life, one is autonomous of that social structure. As long as they stay at home, Irish or British or Australians are not constrained by American driving patterns. But suppose, through American pressure (e.g., so that American tourists would always feel comfortable driving abroad), these countries suddenly instituted the American way of driving. (This is only a hypothetical example; I am not saying this is empirically realistic.) To suddenly be integrated into a pattern of behavior formerly irrelevant to one's life can mean the creation of relative powerlessness and, perhaps,



resentment. Suddenly, these drivers will be less competent and less comfortable on the road than they used to be. On a smaller level, a similar situation arises when, for example, an Irish person visits the United States and rents a car. That person is relatively disadvantaged driving on American roads and quite likely will feel some difficulty in having to participate in an unfamiliar system. The point of this discussion is that lack of participation in a social structure—or, alternatively, the relevance of social structures to one's life—is an aspect of autonomy and thus of power.

## POWER AND IDEOLOGY

Power is a complex thing. First, as Otto Maduro has pointed out, no one is all-powerful.<sup>15</sup> Second, the exercise of power can actually create new spaces of autonomy for dissenting groups. Third, as sociologists studying agenda-setting have demonstrated, power often means control over the relative *priorities* of issues more than control over the *content* of every belief that people have.<sup>16</sup> After we examine these three aspects of power, which have important implications for the study of ideology, it will become clear that ideologies are actually special types of social structures.

The first point, then, is simply that in no institution or social structure will anyone have a monopoly of power. This is important because no one has total ideological control over others. There will always be areas of contest, compromise, and unresolved tensions. There will also be issues that powerful people will simply not care about. If I am your political superior, and you are an obedient subject, it is unlikely that I will care about beliefs irrelevant to your behavior as a subject. For example, I may not care what your religious beliefs are as long as you restrict the application of those beliefs so that they do not have (what I consider to be) political implications.<sup>17</sup> If I am an American president running for reelection, I will care much more about whether you vote Democratic or Republican than about whether we belong to the same religious denomination. (If I am a member of the clergy in your church, however, my ideological priorities will likely be reversed.)

Second, it is possible to exercise power by controlling the agenda and excluding people from participation in political structures, but this can create new spaces of political and ideological autonomy. For example, suppose a monarch expels from the kingdom people who participate in rebellion. Or a pope excommunicates dissenters (like Archbishop Lefebvre, a French bishop who rejected most of the changes within the Catholic Church of the last three decades) who, in that pope's eyes, go too far in rejecting Vatican authority. In the case of Lefebvre, especially important in

his excommunication was his decision to ordain bishops—something Rome had explicitly forbidden—which set up a structure to continue his movement. If Lefebvre had died without ordaining bishops (chosen from among the priests who supported his dissent from the post-Vatican II papacy), his movement would have lacked leadership and the ability to self-reproduce. Because Lefebvre saw himself as a representative of true (i.e., pre-Vatican II) Catholicism, in which only existing bishops could ordain new bishops, his having died without new bishops to replace him would have meant death to the movement.

This type of exercise of power, exemplified by monarch and pope, has some interesting implications. To begin, it makes very clear that the control of ideology involves the exercise of power.<sup>18</sup> The pope decisively punished this flagrant act of disobedience, an act creating new bishops claiming authority to teach and perpetuate Lefebvre's view of Catholicism. If those bishops remained part of the institutional Church, the pope would lose control of part of that institution: the new bishops could continue to propagate their perspective by, for example, controlling the seminary education of new priests. And Catholics might perceive them to be a legitimate part of the Church. And so, by expelling Lefebvre and his followers, the pope made clear that he did not consider them part of the institutional Church. (Controlling ideology through the exercise of power can also be indirect: more powerful persons or groups can shape the social institutions that socialize others.)<sup>19</sup>

But there is also an additional, quite different implication. In some sense, those who are expelled from participation in a social institution, or a social structure in general, have attained an autonomy they did not have before. In practice this might mean that they can become less guarded in their pronouncements now that compromise is not worth pursuing. Or in the case of physical expulsion from a country, they may now be beyond the coercive reach of the ruler they opposed.

While expulsion is an extreme example of forced nonparticipation in a political structure, a similar type of autonomy exists, in part, for people still acting within an institution but whose political participation is restricted. Groups forbidden to participate in certain practices or decisions have, in a negative sense, a certain autonomy. Let us consider the example of Catholic sisters. Women are excluded from ordination to the priesthood, but ordination is a prerequisite to most significant decision-making authority. Women, then, do not generally participate in seminary education of priests, in the hierarchy's decisions on important official Church policy or doctrine, in the interpretation of canon law, and so forth.<sup>20</sup> This means that the activities in which sisters *do* participate are necessarily devalued within the

political processes of the Church; the lives and decisions of sisters are, politically and ideologically speaking, peripheral issues.

In the chapters that follow, we see that this type of autonomy—which to a great extent is simply equivalent to powerlessness—has more complex implications than we would expect. We see that autonomy that results from political *exclusion* is not simply a trivial form of autonomy; it can be the basis of rebellion. In the case of sisters, in practice autonomy meant that the hierarchy did not fully attend to the processes of social and organizational interaction among sisters. Because the details of sisters' lives were relatively devalued ideologically, sisters—if they had adequate resources—could take control of those processes. This was especially true in the wake of Vatican II, as the hierarchy was preoccupied with refining the “more important” policies and doctrines of the Church. It also meant that sisters, once they had the resources to develop ideological independence (after Vatican II), quickly rejected dominant ideological perspectives—that is, the perspectives of the hierarchy. Their lack of participation in the politics that reinforced those perspectives resulted in a weaker commitment than we might have expected, given their lack of rebellion before Vatican II.

This example brings us to the final point about power, a point implied in the previous paragraphs. That is, power often means control over the relative *priorities* of issues more than control over the *content* of every belief that people have. Thus it can be more important to a political ruler that subjects stay out of politics in general than that the ruler know and control every political belief that every subject has. If the subject never expresses or acts on political beliefs, the ruler may not care about the content of those beliefs. Of course, content is not completely irrelevant, either for ruler or subject. Rulers will care more about the content of beliefs they consider to have political implications than about beliefs concerning nonpolitical domains. And it may be the case that ideological content unimportant to a ruler may be important to the subject: perhaps, as subject, you care about your religious freedom but not about sharing political power. In both cases, however, the priority of issues is central. Whether particular contents (of beliefs) are important depends on one's hierarchy of issues. Within the larger social context (as opposed to the idiosyncratic preferences of individuals), content will usually be more important for those issues that are the concern of powerful persons or for issues that become objects of social struggle.

At this point the theoretical discussion has come full circle; it should now be clear that an ideology is a form of social structure. We started by examining some general aspects of social structures: they are social creations, and yet they constrain the people who participate in them. We can

try to overcome those constraints but can succeed only by incurring some significant costs. Structures will have more relevance to the lives of some people than others. And resources and autonomy are essential aspects of our power within social structures as well as our ability to change them.

All these characteristics of social structures are true of ideologies, which are systems of belief developed and maintained through social interaction. What, then, does an ideology look like? An ideology is not simply a list of beliefs. It is more a hierarchy of issues; people with the greatest power within the ideological structure will attempt to control the content of those issues at the top of their hierarchy more than those issues they place at the bottom. An ideology is a hierarchy of issues enforced through the exercise of power, but it always includes various spaces of autonomy and is always potentially an object of political struggle. An ideology can exist only if social interaction (including political interaction) continuously reinforces its hierarchy of issues. It is, however, empirically not static, as the very exercise of power can alter patterns of autonomy and the distribution of resources.

## IDEOLOGIES AS SOCIAL STRUCTURES

A major theme of this book is the relationship between political interaction and ideological change. But we must keep in mind that ideology is not completely determined by the exercise of power; in fact, given the spaces of autonomy that necessarily exist within political interaction, to say that ideology is completely determined by the exercise of power is a contradiction in terms. Let us remember, then, that ideologies also have other properties of social structures. Like buildings, they not only constrain us. They also enable us to do things: we must participate in ideologies to communicate with others not only to survive socially, but even to enjoy life. If we belong to a particular social circle or any group at all—a society, a work group, a religious congregation, a clique in school—we will share certain attitudes, perspectives, even in-jokes.<sup>21</sup> Of course, the larger and less encompassing the group is, generally the less comprehensive is the shared ideology. But within any group, if I share almost no assumptions about the world, use terminology that other people do not understand, or pepper my speech with references to literature or stories unknown to other members of the group, I cannot participate very adeptly. Others will not understand me and will feel uncomfortable around me. My social interaction—a fundamental component of social structures—will either be extremely limited or extremely ineffective. Of course, that does not mean that the structure of beliefs and attitudes in a given society or group is unchanging

rules. They change, and they are the creations and re-creations of members of that group. But they take on a life of their own, and (especially in larger groups) individuals will have minimal ability to change them.

Ideologies, then, sound a lot like social structures. They include understandings and priorities that pattern our social participation. In some cases, sanctions very directly shape ideology: for example, we express an opinion and learn that our family or peers or superiors feel that certain beliefs are wrong or strange. So we internalize their negative perspective. But the patterning of social life is not only about sanctions; it involves active participation.

Granted, it is very difficult to say a priori what the ideological structures are in any given society; indeed, this book takes several hundred pages to demonstrate the existence and nature of such a structure within Catholicism. It would be a grave mistake to take the approach of some sociologists of several decades ago, confidently beginning the task of social analysis by identifying a list of static beliefs and values that supposedly guide a society.<sup>22</sup> Instead, we cannot effectively identify the ideological structures within an institution or a society unless we understand its politics because, this book argues, distributions of power shape ideological structures. *Changes* in power distributions are thus fundamental channels of ideological change.

Indeed, one of the reasons identification of ideological structures is problematic is that social structures do not affect everyone's life in the same way, or to the same degree, because any institution or society contains groups and persons with different amounts and kinds of resources and autonomy. If we identify the content of beliefs of just one group or another, we will not understand the *pattern* of beliefs that links those groups together. When we talk of structures, we mean social patterns that organize the lives (or beliefs) of many people; it is not possible to identify a social structure in the actions or beliefs of just one group or one individual.<sup>23</sup> Although, for example, we may learn a lot about class relations in a society by examining one class, our understanding will be limited; by its nature, a class *structure* is a pattern of relationships among all classes in the society. Only by studying the patterns of political interaction among different participants in the social and ideological structures will we come truly to understand those structures. Even though the claim that any perspective on the world will have varying interpretations is, in principle, generally uncontroversial, there are few empirical sociological analyses, and even fewer developed theories of ideology, that adequately apply this fact.

It is best to hold discussion of the implications of this study for specific theories of ideology until the concluding chapter. For now, let it suffice to

summarize the approach of this book as one that focuses on the influence of power structures on ideological change. I do not argue that power is the only variable that affects the dynamics of Catholic ideologies, but I do believe it is the most important one. In general, I argue that (not only in the Catholic Church) we can understand the likely ideological directions that people will take according to where they stand in distributions of power—that is, power structures. Thus we have to examine the resources they have and the degree and type of autonomy they have within those structures. Developing an independent perspective (what William Sewell would call an “ideological variant” within a larger ideological structure)<sup>24</sup> requires social interaction, the development of a sense of a community. Without sufficient resources groups will be unable to develop their own social communities and their own understandings of the world and (if they are relatively powerless) to challenge those distributions of power.

Usually people excluded from power in social institutions are also excluded from, and unable to develop, sufficient independent resources to develop ideological independence. As Paul M. Harrison and Henry J. Pratt have demonstrated, the centralization of resources is a prime component of the ideological dominance associated with power.<sup>25</sup> But occasionally, often inadvertently, they do develop such resources. Thus as an example, the Catholic hierarchy itself had inadvertently encouraged communities of American sisters to develop their own educational and organizational strengths in the 1950s and 1960s, with the result that this relatively powerless group came very quickly to reject some dominant patriarchal themes of Vatican ideology and develop their own, independent visions of the Church. The ideological history of the Catholic Church, in fact, is most interesting when social changes widen or constrain the autonomy or the resources available to particular groups, thus widening or constraining the possibility of their developing ever more distinctive worldviews. As Robert Wuthnow has pointed out, ideological change quite often develops quickly during relatively short periods, rather than occurring only gradually.<sup>26</sup>

As Wuthnow has also pointed out, ideological change is not a neat, functional process. We become committed to particular perspectives and may have difficulty reconciling the old and the new; or perhaps a change in our autonomy makes it difficult to continue participating in the same social structures. Ideological structures, like any kind of social structure and any kind of building, may have points of stress or weakness where problems are unresolved. Precisely because there will always be struggles over power and there will always be various autonomous spaces within any power structure, ideological change will not always develop in a way consistent with the goals of any one person or group. There will always be unresolved

political struggles and unresolved ideological disputes. Particularly difficult political times will result in attempts to restructure an ideology—change the priorities of, or boundaries between, particular issues. (By perceptively analyzing how scientists have at times been forced to draw public boundaries between science and what they consider pseudoscience, Thomas Gieryn and his colleagues have identified this process as “boundary work.”)<sup>27</sup> Indeed, one of the more interesting developments in Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council has been the ambiguous conciliar doctrine on Church decision-making authority and Church commitment to social and political issues, leading different sectors of the Church to question different parts of the ideological structure. Ideologically, the last quarter century has been a particularly ambiguous and contentious period in the Church’s history, partly due to the legacy left by the council and partly due to the development of new resources and greater autonomy by Catholic groups challenging Vatican dominance. Let us now briefly summarize the argument of the following chapters before turning to a specific, sociohistorical analysis.

### *Ideology and the Catholic Church*

As becomes clear later, among the most important issues in the ideological politics of the modern Catholic Church is the relationship between issues concerning the faith and morals of individuals and families, on the one hand, and what I call sociopolitical issues (or, synonymously, temporal issues), on the other. By “sociopolitical issues,” I mean macroeconomic and macropolitical questions. Throughout this book, when I refer to “faith and morals” I mean Catholic ideology concerning the faith and morals of individuals and families. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the Church gradually widened the distinction between these issues and more “macro,” sociopolitical issues having to do with macropolitics, economics, and state policy.

When officials and theologians of the contemporary Catholic Church speak of avoiding “politicization” of the faith, they mean avoiding emphasis on sociopolitical issues. I do not mean to argue that one can always cleanly distinguish faith and morals from such sociopolitical issues. The important point is that the hierarchy has tried to do so. Indeed, one of the interesting ideological tensions that has emerged in modern Catholic ideology is the difficulty of drawing an exact boundary between these two types of issues.

Ideological debates involve conflicts over the distribution of decision-making power in the Church. Not all Catholic groups are equally involved in or affected by every debate or conflict, although all Catholics are affected to some degree. It is important in this study to focus on groups within the

Church that can teach us the most about the political dynamics of Catholic ideology. This is especially the case given that the Catholic Church is an enormous institution; it is questionable whether any one book can truly talk about the Catholic Church, or even just the U.S. Catholic Church, in its entirety. Indeed, in studying ideological change, we must look in some detail at the ideological history of particular groups because the most interesting variables—resources and autonomy—differ greatly from group to group. To understand what Catholicism really is socially and historically, we must study its divergent interpretations.

Popes, bishops, and, in the United States, sisters are, I argue, the most interesting groups for this study. Given the position each holds in the power structure of the Church, some degree of autonomy combined with significant political resources has led each to take strong, persistent ideological stands at the center of the difficult and unresolved legacy of Vatican II. Examination of these three levels of the Church allows us to study a very wide range of the most important ideological changes and conflicts within the Church. This is not to say that other groups are not important, only that these particular groups allow us to examine the largest range of ideological change. Adding many more groups would require readers to deal with an inordinately long book.

It is worth noting at this point that the Catholic laity in particular is not the most fruitful focus in a study of the patterns of ideological change within the institutional Church. The laity's power in the Church is weak and almost wholly indirect. Whether the laity considers Church leaders' opinions legitimate, then, a topic that James R. Wood investigated in Protestant churches,<sup>28</sup> is not necessarily relevant in the very hierarchical Catholic Church. Thus for example, interest group activism<sup>29</sup> is not as significant in determining Catholic ideology as is the case in many other political and religious institutions. Within what can specifically be called Catholic ideology, the laity are more acted on than they are actors.

Furthermore, as Wood has pointed out, the Catholic laity is composed of many different types of groups existing in a complex matrix of ideological influences, especially in a country with some religious diversity, such as the United States. Not only would Catholicism influence their beliefs, but in addition class, regional, ethnic, and other influences would be much stronger than they would be for Church personnel.<sup>30</sup>

Catholicism may be just as important to members of the laity, but they are less committed to the complex theological and other matters that have a strong influence on those whose entire lives and careers are committed to working within the institutional Church. Thus, as has already been noted, U.S. bishops' sociopolitical opinions simply do not reflect the opinions of



the American Catholic laity. The bishops' opinions are shaped much more by internal Church ideology.

Lay Catholicism is likely to be considerably more diffuse, as these Catholics are often even unaware of debates within Catholic ideology. An example of this comes from (almost unbelievable) survey data that by 1979 only about half of the English Catholic laity had heard of the Second Vatican Council and few took strong positions either for or against the results of the council.<sup>31</sup> This is despite the fact that the meaning of Vatican II is one of the most politicized issues within the Church.<sup>32</sup> In general, some of the most interesting ideological tensions within the U.S. Church are barely even issues for the laity. For example, the attempt to distinguish sociopolitical issues from issues of faith and morals is primarily of importance for the hierarchy but not necessarily of great concern for much of the rest of the Church.<sup>33</sup>

This book, then, examines the main sources of change in modern Catholic ideology and examines how different groups have struggled within the institutional Church to restructure Catholic ideology. The ideological history of the modern Catholic Church begins with social changes in which the papacy lost some of its power to secular forces, which altered the means by which it asserted ideological dominance over other parts of the Church. That process originated with the decline of feudal social structures, in which the Church had been a central beneficiary.

Liberal, anticlerical states, particularly in Italy and France, were resentful of the Church's historical influence and had the power to suppress its operations in their countries; indeed, the pope lost his kingdom to the newly unified republic of Italy. To avoid conflict, the papacy came to gradually deemphasize doctrine that had specific, controversial implications for state policy. Instead, Rome increased emphasis on the faith and morals of Catholic individuals and families as the basis of its religious authority. Faith and morals were ideologically peripheral issues for secular states, mostly irrelevant to their own power. Thus they were happy to allow the Church autonomy over such concerns.

What had happened, then, is that simultaneously the papacy had obtained increased autonomy over one category of issues (more purely "religious" issues) while becoming politically excluded from another category of issues ("temporal" issues). The papacy actually had more latitude over internal Church affairs and doctrine, given the decline of secular state meddling. And even though Rome had to avoid controversial specifics of state policy, it also gained some new autonomy, albeit negative, over sociopolitical issues. Rome no longer had any political reason to participate actively in the legitimation of state policy.

This had interesting implications for papal ideology on temporal issues. Such ideology, most of which fell under the category of social doctrine, became a less binding level of doctrine.<sup>34</sup> It also addressed the topic of state policy only in vague terms, in contrast to the Church's style while it still had temporal power. By avoiding specificity, Rome avoided ever condemning particular state policies.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, in developing the content of social doctrine, Rome drew on centuries-old Catholic conceptions of corporatist society and rejected the legitimacy of liberalism. This was true even though the critique of liberalism was vague and subordinated in importance to issues of faith and morals. Within the limits of liberal Europe, Rome became fairly oppositional ideologically.

But the reconstruction of Catholic ideology, a political process, had implications for the distribution of power within the Church. For example, Rome's inability to assert temporal political rights meant that the hierarchy gradually abandoned attempts to control the political opinions and activities of Catholics. Nevertheless, Rome was slow to fully abandon the model of church-state alliance through which it had prospered in medieval times. The Second Vatican Council implemented important doctrinal reforms that addressed the centralization of power in the Church and the Church's role in a secular world in which its status was very different than it had been in the nineteenth century. The council touched on several crucial issues: the centralization of authority in Rome, the Church's relation to temporal power, the nature of unchanging doctrine, and the Church's perspective on social reform.

In reaction to Roman centralization of ideological control, the desire among theologians and bishops for decentralization effected the council declaration that the Church is ruled "collegially" by pope and bishops. There was also a more general, ambiguous statement that all Catholics, as "the People of God," share in the Church's authority. Nevertheless, the significance of collegiality was ambiguous. On the one hand, the council affirmed Rome's ideological control over faith and morals. On the other hand, the council granted increased organizational autonomy and legitimacy to national conferences of bishops, even if it did not grant those conferences any new authority.

Two other important reforms both evolved from Vatican II's attempt to abandon the doctrinal legacy that still formally valued church-state alliance, although such doctrine had been deemphasized for much of the previous century. For the first time, the council formally declared that the Church should not be involved in temporal government and that state or

other coercion of religious beliefs is illegitimate. These were both positions that nineteenth-century popes had rejected.

This declaration had some interesting implications. First, it had to be explained. The need to justify the abandonment of doctrine that a century before had been part of Catholicism's ideological core led the council also to declare that doctrine can develop with the times. Such a declaration gives important ideological ammunition to any group that argues that Catholic doctrine needs to develop even further—for example, toward a more pluralist and/or socially active Church. Exactly how one determines when doctrine needs to develop was not addressed.

The new view of church-state relations also had some interesting implications for the boundary between central religious concerns (faith and morals) and sociopolitical concerns. The council incorporated a basically liberal view of politics into its ideology, although it did not accept a liberal view of morality. With Vatican II, the Church implicitly treated "moral" issues as outside the bounds of politics. Thus in the United States, bishops declare that the government should uphold the moral prohibition on abortion and yet see such declarations as moral, not political, statements. Much as conflict had emerged when the pre-Vatican II Church defined the boundary between church and state differently than did secular states, conflict has emerged as the Church attempts to retain its own ideological boundary between the moral and the political.

And yet the council also suggested that the Church needed to be concerned not only with spirituality. In attempting to abandon a century of withdrawal from the world—partially forced by liberal states and partly a result of Rome's increasing emphasis on Catholic faith and morals, in opposition to secular influences—the council also declared a renewed commitment to political and social reform and thus to social doctrine and sociopolitical issues in general. Yet the council did not explain how the Church, on the one hand, had different realms of authority than did states but, on the other hand, should actively be involved in temporal issues. The implications of these reforms were, then, both ambiguous and potentially far-reaching.

Focusing in detail on one branch of the Church allows us to see the effects of Rome's forced ideological adjustment on less powerful sectors of the Church. The U.S. case is especially interesting because the particular church-state relations that it experienced led it to favor a reconstruction of Catholic ideology along the lines of some of the Vatican II reforms decades before Rome or before the actual council did. As a minority church, it could only benefit from a wide separation of church and state, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed about 150 years ago.<sup>36</sup>

Through most of its history, the U.S. Church existed on the periphery of both the international Church and of U.S. society. Interestingly, then, it did not absorb either the Vatican or the American perspective on liberal society. As a minority church occasionally experiencing discrimination, the U.S. Catholic Church generally avoided sociopolitical controversy. With Vatican II, however, the Roman and U.S. Catholic perspectives on the fundamental issue of church-state relations came to resemble each other. Once, then, the American episcopacy had attained a more secure place in both the international Church and in American society, it applied papal sociopolitical ideology with a new vigor.

U.S. bishops are a particularly interesting group because nearly all the dilemmas and ambiguities of Vatican II's attempt to resolve the legacy of the nineteenth-century ideological restructuring have affected the bishops. Their particular dilemma emerges from the fact that they are relatively high in the power structure (and thus their power depends on the maintenance of a substantial degree of orthodoxy) and yet their power vis-à-vis Rome is fairly limited, given how ideologically centralized are the core issues of faith and morals.

The fact that, ideologically, collegiality was only partly implemented spurred U.S. bishops to increase their commitment to the one level of ideology where they could be fairly independent of Rome—issues with direct implications for state policy. But this increased commitment does not actually give them increased authority within the Church's power structure, for they are reluctant to question the ideological structure that subordinates such issues to faith and morals. At the same time, their increased commitment to these sociopolitical issues has made more explicit the tension involved in attempting simultaneously to influence state policy, avoid specific policy commitments, and distinguish binding doctrine on faith and morals from nonbinding social doctrine.

The ideological dynamics of Catholic political structure are quite different at lower levels of the Church's power structure. As a fairly powerless group, American sisters had few political resources in the Church before the 1950s. But with the development of both intellectual and organizational resources, the unintended result of initiatives by both Pope Pius XII (1939–1958) and Vatican II, it became clear that U.S. sisters' commitment to the hierarchical, patriarchal ideology of Rome was quite vulnerable to change. They quickly challenged Rome's control of their daily lives and developed a most decentralizing interpretation of the meaning of Vatican II. Thus as a group less powerful than the bishops, they were less committed to dominant ideology and developed a more radical ideological challenge (once they had the resources to do so).

A brief comparison with the Latin American Church provides a different political context in which to examine the effects of Catholic ideological reconstruction. Unlike the U.S. Church, historically the Latin American Church has been closely linked with ruling secular elites and with state powers. Its relationship to social and state power has been much more similar to the situation of the papacy in medieval times than to the U.S. Church.

U.S. bishops do not have among themselves much of a political culture that looks to lay alliance as a part of sociopolitical ideology. Perhaps they are in the midst of developing such a tradition; but the national Churches of Latin America have long depended on links with powerful secular forces as the basis of their institutional strength. Historically, however, their ties to the poorer masses of Catholics have been weak. Having experienced a sharing of power with such forces, the Church shared the ideology of privilege and authoritarian power.

The episcopacy of all the Latin American Churches has historically focused primarily on the institutional strength of the Church; in this respect they are similar to U.S. bishops. For some in Latin America, that strength is still founded on alliance with the state and with powerful, wealthy elites; consequently, in such countries the episcopacy has not been receptive to Vatican II themes emphasizing social reform and, of course, even less so to liberation Catholicism. In other countries, a widened church-state separation has developed in this century, but the episcopacy has been unwilling or unable to be ideologically innovative, either because of continued close ties with wealthy and/or powerful, conservative, secular groups or because of a lack of organizational strength.

Yet in other national Churches, namely, Chile and Brazil, the Church has at different times been forced into an adversarial role with the state and has loosened ties with secular elites. Only in Brazil, in which an organizationally strong Church is faced with strong competition from other religions, has the episcopacy chosen and been able to build links with poorer Catholics and given some legitimacy to liberation Catholicism.

In all Latin American national Churches, as in all social institutions throughout the world, the patterns of ideological conflict depend on the patterns of political conflict. Thus even in Brazil, once relations with the state improved, the episcopacy began to withdraw from sociopolitical issues and thus from its commitment to liberation Catholicism. A stronger commitment to liberation themes exists throughout the region among minority groups of priests, religious, and laity.

Let us now turn to the church-state conflicts that sparked the modern reconstruction of Catholic ideology.