

## Westphalia and Back: Complexifying the Church-World Duality in Catholic Thought

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SOME YEARS AGO, I was staying with an aunt and uncle in Winona, Minnesota when I came upon an old Catholic primary school geography textbook in a spare bedroom that had previously been occupied by a now grown-up cousin. The book is entitled *World Neighbors*; it was published in 1952 by William H. Sadlier, Inc., still today a major publisher of educational materials for public and non-public schools, as well as catechetical materials for Catholic schools. The book's foreword announced "the beginning of an era in Catholic education," but to contemporary eyes it looks more like a relic from the far distant past. Particularly fascinating is the depiction of a small town in Iowa called Westphalia, presented in a section entitled "A Study of a Community." It is an entirely Catholic town, settled by German immigrants, where the social and economic life of the community is organized through the parish, whose pastor reigns like a benevolent despot. It seems to belong to a much earlier era: the Middle Ages. The fact that it is mid-twentieth century America seems to mark it as an anachronism, a last-ditch effort to keep the modern world at bay. As we know with the benefit of hindsight, the life represented by Westphalia, Iowa, was not the beginning of an era, but the end of one. The insular Catholic universe it represented was about to be swept away by the changes of Vatican II and, more generally, the 1960s. Rather than huddling together and trying to protect the church from the world, the church would throw its arms open to the world and embrace modernity. Instead of seeing the world as one big opportunity for sin from which the church must stand apart, we would recognize the essential goodness of the world and seek to locate the church in the world, always trying to transform the world from within.

So goes the familiar story. As a broad characterization of changes in the Catholic orbit in the late twentieth century, it is not entirely inaccurate. And as a cautionary tale against nostalgia for a lost world, it is salutary. Those who want to return to a lost world usually end up making a mess of this one. Nevertheless, as a neatly progressive tale,

the familiar story is incomplete and oversimplified. It fails to appreciate the efforts, sometimes successful, to bring the gospel to bear on material life in quite sophisticated ways. In dismissing these efforts, it fails to recognize what the past has to teach us today as we negotiate our way through the postmodern world.

I will begin with the story of Westphalia, circa 1952, then turn to the way that social milieu is narrated by the standard understanding of the church-world duality after Vatican II. I will argue that “world” has multiple meanings, and that the standard narrative does not do justice to the way that Westphalia engaged with the world. I will, finally, suggest some things that can be learned from complexifying the church-world dualism. I intend this paper as a bridge-building exercise; rather than siding with factions who would either dismiss or romanticize the pre-Vatican II Church in America, I will argue that we can attain a more nuanced view of that Church by attending to a more nuanced view of the church/world relationship.

#### JOURNEY TO WESTPHALIA

*World Neighbors* makes clear on page 1 that Catholics do not study geography out of idle curiosity. We need to know the land where God has put us and know about our fellow children of God in order that we may love them, and thus “do our part in helping God’s Kingdom come.”<sup>1</sup> The first section of the book deals with the land of the United States—rivers, lakes, climate, etc.—and the second deals with the people of the United States, “a Nation of Many Peoples.” Within this second section is a subsection on community life in the U.S., in which Westphalia is featured as a kind of ideal. “In this community there are no poor people, no very rich, but all are comfortable, prosperous, hard-working, most of them farmers. There is no crime, no jail, no police force. The Ten Commandments are the Law here, says the Pastor, Father Hubert Duren. The Community and the Parish are here one and the same.”<sup>2</sup> Although there are only a hundred families, Westphalia boasts “15 of its sons in the priesthood, 96 girls are nuns, 17 boys monks or Brothers, and 18 boys are in the armed forces.”<sup>3</sup> The town’s year is organized around the liturgical calendar and special occasions such as the blessing of fields by the Pastor each spring.

Westphalia was not always such a happy place, the textbook reports. “When Father Duren came to Westphalia years ago, he found the people poor, all their earnings draining out to the big towns where they bought supplies. There was no good school, no way of marketing produce for fair returns, no amusement for young people.

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<sup>1</sup> Sister M. Juliana Bedier, *World Neighbors* (New York: W. H. Sadlier, Inc., 1952), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 64.

Families were breaking up, drifting away. He taught the people the principles of co-operation and organized a credit union, thus keeping money in the community and providing a fund to improve farms and livestock. He set up a co-op store where farmers buy supplies.”<sup>4</sup> The co-operative store gave the farmers control over processing and marketing their own meat and dairy products, and returned the profits to them, since they were its owners. In turn, the community built a co-operative beauty parlor and a co-operative garage. They used the profits from these ventures to build a school “where children are taught to co-operate, to esteem rural life, to live as happy, productive members of the Community, following the Church’s social teaching and the liturgy through the year.”<sup>5</sup> The community also built a recreation hall for dances, shows, and parties, a clubhouse with a soda fountain and billiard tables, and a baseball field. The people of Westphalia are shown enjoying these amenities in a gallery of pictures that accompanies the text. The pictures concentrate on the Zimmerman family, various of whose 14 children are shown shoveling alfalfa, repairing a hog feeder, receiving communion at daily Mass, visiting the soda fountain and the credit union, and relaxing at home, where Don and Jerry pop corn, Joey and Celia wash dishes, and Michael makes rosaries.

Residents of Westphalia who remember it from that time speak of constant social activity surrounding the parish. Movies followed Sunday night devotions. There were plays, band concerts, baseball games, monthly meetings of the Rosary Society for women and the Holy Name Society for men, parish picnics, bingo nights, and special processions on feast days with townspeople carrying a large rosary, each bead as large as a softball. As one longtime resident says, “Religion was woven into our everyday life at that time.”<sup>6</sup> There were no sharp distinctions between religious, social, and economic life. Support for the local businesses—“People knew that if the community was to prosper one had to support the businesses”—was a religious duty as much as it was a social pleasure; “Saturday nights people would come to the Co-op Grocery store to buy groceries for the week. This gave everyone a chance to visit with friends.”

The center of the community was, without question, Father Duren, shown in the textbook chomping a cigar and playing billiards at the clubhouse. Longtime residents remember Fr. Duren as a tall man,

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<sup>4</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 65.

<sup>5</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 66.

<sup>6</sup> A dozen residents of Westphalia who remember the time to which the textbook refers were kind enough to complete questionnaires that I sent them. I am extremely grateful to Lorene Kaufmann, parish secretary of St. Boniface Church in Westphalia, for all her kindnesses and help in soliciting responses from people in Westphalia. All subsequent quotes from residents of Westphalia are taken from these completed questionnaires.

“demanding, but gentle,” who composed music, painted, hand carved furniture, and built his own home with an energy-saving cooling system of his own design. In addition to the feats mentioned in the textbook, Fr. Duren also built and stocked an artificial lake for the community to fish and built two shrines, one to Our Lady and the other to St. Isidore, patron saint of farmers. The success of the community did not happen by accident, the textbook reports. Father Duren “follows a 5-point program in which religion, education, recreation, commerce, and credit are organized with the Church as the center of life in community and family. He calls it the Complete Life, Christian, American, and democratic. He believes Americans should rebuild their small communities. We should all unite under God and move in the direction of security on earth and in eternity. Westphalia shows it can be done.”<sup>7</sup> The textbook reports that young people no longer wish to leave the small town, but it does not mention what some old timers in the community have told me: the young people had to ask Fr. Duren’s permission to go to a dance in another town. As one resident reports, “Mostly everything that went on went through him.” Not everyone was pleased. Though most reminisce fondly about Fr. Duren, one says, “He had his favorites, people who were brainwashed to his program. If not, he didn’t care much for you.”

#### NARRATING WESTPHALIA

It is easy for a contemporary reader to laugh and shake one’s head at such a neat and tidy Catholic enclave. The account in the textbook is doubtlessly somewhat romanticized; people surely chafed at Fr. Duren’s authority. Recent revelations of priestly abuse of authority cannot help but make contemporary readers wary of such 40-year reigns in which the pastor’s leadership is unquestioned. Even if the textbook’s account of life in Westphalia circa 1952 is essentially accurate, however, few Catholics today would wish to return to such a time and place. Attempts like that of Ave Maria, Florida, to recreate a kind of cohesive Catholic culture in Catholic enclaves have been marginal efforts and marred with controversy.

The standard way to narrate communities like Westphalia centers on the church-world dualism and pivots around the Second Vatican Council.<sup>8</sup> In brief, the story goes like this: once Catholics huddled in all-Catholic ghettos, at odds with the world. After Vatican II, Catho-

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<sup>7</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 67.

<sup>8</sup> For example see Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1992); Richard Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1989); and James McEvoy, “Church and World at the Second Vatican Council: The Significance of *Gaudium et Spes*,” *Pacifica* 19 (Feb. 2006): 37-57.

lics came confidently to embrace the world, and became leaven in a pluralistic society. A typical account is that of Charles Curran's recent book *The Social Mission of the U.S. Catholic Church: A Theological Perspective*. Curran makes clear that his book is not simply a history of the social mission of the Catholic Church in America, but is a theological interpretation of that history.<sup>9</sup> Chapter one, entitled "Early Historical Context and Taking Care of Our Own," is a brief overview of the history of the immigrant Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. The title of the chapter tells the story. Poor and unwashed immigrants from Catholic homelands in Europe flooded the United States over the course of the nineteenth century, often incurring the hostility of the native Protestants, both for social reasons—the poor and foreigners are often disdained—and for theological reasons: "The greatest problem many Americans had with the Catholic Church was its failure to accept religious freedom and the basic principles of the U.S. Constitution."<sup>10</sup> Catholics tended to think that religious freedom was acceptable only if it was impracticable to offer official recognition to the Catholic Church as the bearer of truth. Error, after all, had no rights. The erroneous tended to disapprove of this view of the world, and nativist reactions against Catholicism sometimes turned violent. The Catholic reaction was to form their own parochial schools, since public schools were essentially Protestant schools. Extensive efforts at poor relief undertaken by Catholic religious orders were in part motivated by the desire to keep Catholic children out of the care of publicly-funded efforts, run by Protestant groups, to reform and improve the poor. Catholic laborers banded together into Catholic labor unions, beginning in 1869, and Catholic religious orders founded an extensive system of Catholic hospitals, which did minister to non-Catholics in times of crisis.<sup>11</sup> Catholic efforts before World War I, according to Curran, were largely directed to "taking care of our own" and not addressing "the reform of U.S. social institutions."<sup>12</sup> In addition to dealing with the hordes of poor Catholic immigrants, however, Catholics did try to present themselves as good, patriotic Americans, to lessen the stigma of foreigner with which they were often associated.

Curran's second chapter tells the story of the social mission of the Church from World War I to the Second Vatican Council, the period in which the *World Neighbors* textbook was produced. After the bishops formed the National Catholic War Council to show Catholic support for the American cause in World War I, the bishops—

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<sup>9</sup> Charles E. Curran, *The Social Mission of the U.S. Catholic Church: A Theological Perspective* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2011), x-xi.

<sup>10</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 5-11.

<sup>12</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 6.

through the later-renamed National Catholic Welfare Conference—began to address public policy issues under the leadership of John A. Ryan, who directed the NCWC Social Action Department from 1920 to 1945. Curran calls Ryan’s efforts “the first attempts by the U.S. Catholic Church to develop its social mission.”<sup>13</sup> All the previous efforts do not count as “social mission” for Curran because they do not address American society as a whole. Ryan saw the Church as a hierarchical institution whose primary business was the saving of souls. In this sense, as Curran points out, his thought obeyed the Neo-Scholastic distinction between natural and supernatural orders. But Ryan thought that the moral law necessary to the salvation of souls also included social and economic issues such as a living wage. The other key figure in Curran’s pre-Vatican II narrative is John Courtney Murray, though in many ways Murray was ahead of his time, laying the groundwork for Vatican II. Murray was in the vanguard of emphasizing the independence of the laity from direct obedience to the hierarchy in social matters. Rather than the Catholic Action model, in which laypeople addressed social issues from within an organization juridically subject to the bishops, Murray called for Catholic action, with a small “a,” in which laity played a direct role in the secular institutions of civil society to bring about a more just society. Murray also defended inter-creedal cooperation with non-Catholics for a better world.<sup>14</sup>

Curran provides an overview of the different kinds of Catholic groups working in the pre-Vatican II period: organizations of Catholic labor unionists, sociologists, and economists; the Legion of Decency; the Catholic Association for International Peace; the Catholic Worker; efforts to promote anti-communism and fight racism; community organizing efforts in collaboration with Saul Alinsky; the Catholic Family Movement, and others. The 1930s through the 1950s were, Curran says, “a golden period of Catholic action.”<sup>15</sup> As immigration slowed and Catholics moved toward the American mainstream, Catholic attention moved from taking care of Catholic immigrants to the concerns of the broader society. There was an impressive range of Catholic organizations hard at work to bring Catholic social teaching to fruition in America, from organizations like the Legion of Decency that looked to the hierarchy for guidance to the majority of efforts which were led by laypeople. There were large Catholic organizations dedicated to bringing Catholic teaching directly to bear on labor, war, economy, racism, poverty, and family—all the great issues of the day.

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<sup>13</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 17-18.

<sup>15</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 36.

Most of these organizations collapsed in the 1960s. Curran explains the collapse in part sociologically: Catholics went to college on the G.I. Bill after World War II, became affluent, and moved to the suburbs, away from tight-knit parish units. The newly prosperous and more Americanized Catholics were less likely to look to the Church for guidance. But beyond sociology, Curran is more interested in giving a theological account of the changes in Catholic social action. In chapters three and four of his book, he narrates the changes as an effect of the changes in the way the Catholic Church viewed itself and its own relationship to the world in the wake of Vatican II. According to Curran, pre-Vatican II treatises on the Church were defensive, concerned to protect the Church from Protestantism and secularism. The institutional and hierarchical aspects of the Church were emphasized, and the Church itself tended to be identified with the Kingdom of God. There was a two-tiered division of labor between those called to leave the world for the perfection of the religious life, and those laity called to live in the world. Vatican II, on the other hand, tended to present the Church as a mystery, a sacrament in and to the world, rather than a bulwark against the world. The call of the laity to perfection was emphasized, and the Church was seen not as the Kingdom, but as a pilgrim community called to witness to the Kingdom as it journeys through the world.<sup>16</sup>

Curran writes that the Church's ecclesiology changed in Vatican II, but he also wants to claim a "significant continuity in the understanding of the Catholic Church throughout the centuries."<sup>17</sup> Rather than turn to some classical Catholic theological sources, however, he turns instead to Protestant sociology of the twentieth century, that of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber. Weber's distinction between church and sect was developed by Troeltsch into a three-part typology of church, sect, and mysticism. The last term goes unused by Curran, who adopts the basic contrast between church and sect as the framework for analyzing Catholic social action in the U.S. Those Christians who follow the sect type, as exemplified by the Amish and other Anabaptist groups, see themselves as a small minority who follow the Sermon on the Mount strictly; they see "themselves in opposition to the world around them... if one does not detach from the rest of the world one ultimately has to compromise these Christian tenets. Sectarians believe themselves to be called as faithful witnesses to the Gospel message, not called to transform society."<sup>18</sup> The church type, exemplified by the Catholic Church, is a large group "that exists within the world and works to influence existing cultural, political, and economic structures. The church type moderates the radical eth-

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<sup>16</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 41-2.

<sup>17</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 42.

<sup>18</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 42.

ic of Jesus.”<sup>19</sup> The basic contrast between sect and church is between those who detach themselves from the world and those who work within the world.

Curran comments that Troeltsch used the term “sect” as descriptive, not evaluative. But he adds, “Troeltsch’s approach is sociological and descriptive but it points to aspects that are normative for the Catholic Church.”<sup>20</sup> The Catholic Church in Curran’s view clearly conforms to Troeltsch’s church type, not only descriptively but normatively. Curran then goes on to parse this normative judgment about the Catholic Church into four related types of inclusivity: in relation to Church membership, in its concern for all of reality, in its basic approach to theology (“both-and” not “either-or”), and in recognizing different levels of morality with different degrees of certitude. The second mark of inclusivity is especially relevant to the relationship of church to world, and according to Curran clearly distinguishes the church type from the sect type. The church does not withdraw from the world, but is concerned about the world as a whole. At the same time, the church recognizes that the world has its own autonomy that must be respected; but this cannot mean that God’s wishes for creation can be ignored. With regard to the relationship of church and state, after Vatican II the Catholic Church no longer seeks to subordinate the state to itself, but rather seeks to work for justice within the structures of the state. The theological justification for this embrace of all of reality is the fact that creation is the good gift of a good God. “The created, the natural, and the human are not evil”<sup>21</sup> but rather mediate the presence of God to us. The sacraments of the Church display this embrace of mediation:

The Eucharist is basically a celebratory meal recalling the many meals Jesus celebrated with his disciples, including what we call the Last Supper. The celebratory meal is the primary way in which human families and friends gather together to celebrate their love and friendship for one another.... So the liturgy takes over the fundamental sharing inherent in a meal and makes the meal the primary

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<sup>19</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*. After discussing the various types of inclusivity that come with being a church, not a sect, Curran returns to sociology and cites various surveys indicating that the number of committed Catholics has dropped in the U.S. over the past several decades, and that many American Catholics are looking to individual conscience rather than to the Church for guidance on moral issues. Curran concludes, “Sociological surveys by their very nature can never be normative or prescriptive, but they indicate in their own way that the Catholic Church is a big church, inclusive of saints and sinners and of the more or less committed, in which there is both unity on core issues and diversity on more peripheral issues” (53).

<sup>21</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission* 47.



way in which Christians celebrate God's love and their commitment to love God and neighbor.<sup>22</sup>

In the following chapter, Curran takes this post-Vatican II understanding of the Catholic Church and shows its effects on the social mission of the Church. According to Curran, in the pre-Vatican II Church, the mission of the Church was seen as twofold. Divinization, the work of sanctifying the people, was the job of the clergy and religious. Humanization, working for the betterment of the world, was the role of the laity. The main development in the wake of Vatican II, according to Curran, has been the integration of the two missions into one.<sup>23</sup> Now the transformation of the world is seen as an integral aspect of the preaching of the gospel. This is a direct result of the Vatican II emphasis on the dialogue between the Church and the world.<sup>24</sup> As a result of this breaking down of the supernatural/natural dichotomy, the roles of clergy, religious, and the laity have changed as well. The full gospel dignity of the laity's work in the world has been recognized, while the clergy and religious have come out of their confinement in the supernatural sphere to become actively involved in working for the transformation of the world. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, for example, has claimed working for a more just and peaceful world as integral to its calling.<sup>25</sup> An important manifestation of this active embrace of the world has been the breaking down of the triumphalism and separatism of the Catholic Church. We have moved out of the "Catholic Ghetto."<sup>26</sup> The Church no longer seeks to foster specifically Catholic social organizations, but rather encourages Catholics to work together with all people of goodwill, of another religion or none at all, to foster justice in a pluralistic society. At the same time, Catholics now work with others through the mechanism of the state. Structural change through public policy is the most important way the Church works to transform the world. "From a theoretical perspective, there is no doubt that structural change is a very effective way to correct injustice, which explains the Church's present-day emphasis on change in public policy on a number of issues."<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Curran gives a nod to the principle of subsidiarity, which shows the coherence of Catholic social teaching with the limited constitutional government of American democracy. Government should only intervene to do what voluntary associations cannot do on their own.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 57-8.

<sup>24</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 58-9.

<sup>25</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 66.

<sup>26</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 71.

<sup>28</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 72-3.

Overall, Curran's narration of changes in Catholic social mission in America is a progressive tale. We have moved from huddling together in Catholic ghettos like Westphalia to embracing the world in all its plurality. Catholic Charities and Catholic health care institutions now receive significant government funding and mostly resemble secular institutions, but this is simply a flowering of the Catholic emphasis on mediation and the desire to avoid being a "sect."<sup>29</sup> The death of most Catholic social action movements in the United States is attributed to Vatican II, and celebrated. "The very concept of Catholic Action no longer made sense after Vatican II, when action on behalf of justice and the transformation of the world were seen as the constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel and the mission of the Church."<sup>30</sup> Why Catholic Action does not qualify for this conception of "action on behalf of justice and the transformation of the world" is not clear, except that, in Curran's view, the more justice and transformation of the world are seen as constitutive of the Church, the more the Church should come to be constituted by the world. Curran explains that we have moved beyond hierarchical Church documents that

see the Church and the world as two previously constituted entities that then enter into dialogue and relationship with one another. But political and liberation theologians do not understand faith as an independently constituted reality illuminating the political or economic sphere. The prior question is how the commitment to struggle for the poor and against injustice affects faith itself. Commitment to this struggle is the horizon that shapes our understanding of faith itself and of the Church.<sup>31</sup>

Curran mentions no reciprocal relationship whereby the world is constituted by the Church. The world is simply out there, a reality with which the Church must reckon.

#### CHURCH AND WORLD

Curran's tale is attractive because, like all progressive narratives, it allows us to see our current situation as superior to what came before. Once we were huddled against the world, and now we have turned toward the world and embraced it in order to transform it. Who beside sociopaths want to go back to such a negative and defensive attitude toward the world? I think Curran's narrative is problematic—not because I wish to return to the pre-Vatican II Church, but because it oversimplifies the relationship of the Church to the world by reading it through the church/sect dualism, and in doing so

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<sup>29</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 81-5.

<sup>30</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Curran, *The Social Mission*, 59.

too easily dismisses the relevance of pre-Vatican II efforts to conform the world to the gospel.

The problem begins with the fact that Curran—without recognizing the difference among them—uses the church/world duality in at least three different ways:

- A. It follows the Catholic/non-Catholic binary, such that embrace of the world means the embrace of non-Catholics.
- B. It follows the God/creation or supernatural/natural binary, such that embrace of the world means recognizing the goodness of the created order and the way it mediates God's presence to us.
- C. It follows the Christ/culture or faith/daily life or religious/social binary, such that embrace of the world means integrating the gospel with economic and political and social realities.

Conflating these three meanings of church/world leaves Curran without sufficient nuance to recognize more than two different approaches to the church/world question. We are left with a choice between church type and sect type—or to question the very categories with which he is operating.

The breaking down of barriers between non-Catholics and Catholics in the post-Vatican II era should be recognized as an unqualified gain. To describe this movement as an embrace of the world by the Church, however, is misleading. The ecumenical movement, from the Catholic point of view, is rather a recognition that those who were previously anathematized as belonging to the realm of perdition and not to the Church are now recognized as belonging to the one church of Christ, even though not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. The “realm of perdition”—those whose salvation is in serious jeopardy by reason of their obstinate refusal to recognize Christ—corresponds to the Johannine use of “world” (*kosmos*) to mean that part of creation which is still in rebellion against Christ's definitive rule (see, e.g., John 12:31, 16:11, 18:36). This use of the church/world duality as corresponding to those who follow Christ/those who are in rebellion against Christ—let's call this sense D—is not employed by Curran at all, despite its biblical pedigree.

Sense D is the primary way the Gospel of John uses the term “world,” but John also uses it secondarily as in B to denote the created order.<sup>32</sup> In this case, however, the world is not located in a duality

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<sup>32</sup> The marginal comment on John 1:10 in The New Oxford Annotated Bible notes, “The primary meaning of *world* in the Fourth Gospel is the fallible social systems and social relations created by humanity... but it also denotes physical creation, including humanity.”

with the church; the church is part of the created order. Curran, of course, would agree. But he thinks that there is a type of Christian—the sect type—that overlooks the goodness of the created order that came into being through Christ (John 1:10), and thus turns its back on the world, trying to maintain its own purity against the evils of the created order. For Curran, then, the two different uses of the term “world” in the Gospel of John reflect not two quite different meanings of the word *kosmos*—used by the author of the Fourth Gospel in two quite distinct contexts—but rather two different types of being church, one that has a positive view of creation and one that has a negative view. The church/world relation then becomes a matter of the church’s attitude toward the world, whether one shuns it or embraces it. But the choice that is being presented to the readers of the Gospel of John is not yes or no to creation, as the Gnostics thought, but yes or no to Christ’s reign. The corresponding light/dark and ascending/descending dualities in John do not correspond to spirit/matter—which would be a Gnostic reading—but rather to those who accept Christ’s kingdom/those who reject it. The Gospel of John is not trying to get the reader to say yes to creation (the secondary use of *kosmos*) but to say no to sin (the primary use of *kosmos*), although of course creation is assumed to be good, as the echoes of Genesis 1:1-5 in John 1:1-5 make obvious.

Troeltsch’s church/sect distinction is equally distorting if it is the lens through which one approaches the relationship between the gospel and economic, political, and social life (option C). For Curran, the church/world duality corresponds to the religious/social or Christ/culture duality. The sect type of Christians consists of those who detach themselves from the world, by which is meant the larger surrounding culture and its economic, political, and social life. The church type embraces the world by participating in that life, thus breaking down all of these dichotomies and helping to spread the Kingdom of God by transforming the world from within. If presented in these terms, who would not want to be church type rather than sectarian? When B and C are conflated, it seems especially obvious that the church does not want to turn its back on God’s good creation, but rather to embrace the grace found in all natural things, and thus to participate fully in the world in all its dimensions, economic, political, and social.

But there are good reasons to reject the choice between church and sect, because of their distorting effect on church/world discourse. To begin, Troeltsch’s typology fits awkwardly in Curran’s own narrative. If the Catholic Church is normatively church type and not sect type, why did the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church refuse to embrace the world in the way that Curran narrates? Curran fails to explain why, if the church type is in the Catholic Church’s DNA, it took until after Vatican II to realize it. It may be that the immigrant experience

in America produced a particularly long-lasting collective amnesia in the American Catholic community, one that was righted only when Catholics entered the mainstream of American society in the 1960s. It may be, on the other hand, that the very terms of Troeltsch's typology are insufficient to understand the experience of the Catholic Church in America.

In traditional Catholic usage, the distinction between church and sect was determined not by a particular group's attitude toward the world, but by that group's attitude toward the Church. A sect was a group that rejected Church authority. From the Catholic point of view, what made the Waldensians a sect and their contemporaries, the Franciscans, a religious order within the Church had nothing to do with differences in their attitudes toward the "world." Both were equally "unworldly" in the sense of D above—rejecting, through evangelical poverty and the renunciation of violence, the powers and principalities of the *kosmos*—and both were equally "worldly" in the sense of B above, embracing the natural world as God's good creation.<sup>33</sup> With regard to C, both were either shunning the world or seeking to transform the world's attitudes toward power and material goods, depending on how one narrates it. But the key difference, what made the Waldensians a sect in Catholic eyes, was not their attitude toward the world, but their rejection of Church authority, in sharp contrast with the Franciscans.

For Troeltsch, on the other hand, "The Franciscan movement belonged originally to the sect-type of lay religion."<sup>34</sup> Eventually, Troeltsch says, the Franciscans split into two factions, one that remained true to the sect type (the various kinds of Franciscan "Spirituals") and those who were domesticated into the church-type system. What marks the original Franciscan (and Waldensian) spirit as sectarian was its rigid adherence to what Troeltsch calls the "Law of Jesus."<sup>35</sup> According to Troeltsch, Jesus' message was purely religious, and did not, at first, produce a social ethic; "in the whole range of the Early Christian literature—missionary and devotional—both within and without the New Testament, there is no hint of any formulation of the 'Social' question; the central problem is always purely religious."<sup>36</sup> Because it shuns the social, Troeltsch writes of the "Gospel Ethic,"

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<sup>33</sup> The followers of Francis are well-known for their positive regard for the natural world, as in Francis' Canticle of the Sun, and I can find no evidence of any dualism amongst the Waldensians, despite their proximity to the Cathars. Reinarius Saccho's 1254 list of accusations against the Waldensians contains no hint of ontological dualism or a negative attitude toward material creation. Saccho's list can be found at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/waldo2.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/waldo2.html).

<sup>34</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 355.

<sup>35</sup> Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching*, 355-8.

<sup>36</sup> Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching*, 39.

“Its first outstanding characteristic is an unlimited, unqualified individualism.”<sup>37</sup> The Sermon on the Mount was not intended to provide an ethics or a politics by which the social order could be maintained; it was instead a manifesto for the pure, who would await the Parousia in isolation from the mainstream of society. When the Roman emperor converted to Christianity in the fourth century, the church type came to the fore, in which the teachings of Jesus were moderated to accommodate the realities of the social world, which simultaneously created the opportunity for clearly defined sects within the Christian movement to separate themselves out from the world. Just as Curran does not consider the Catholic Church to have had a “social mission” until it was ready to address the whole of society, so Troeltsch uses the term “social” to refer only to an ethic that is directed at governing society as a whole. In other words, the very terms in which Troeltsch casts his supposedly descriptive analysis are dictated from the point of view of the church type. Troeltsch assumes that, even in the ancient and medieval worlds, there was such a thing as “society” as a whole. He assumes, furthermore, that religious/social, religious/political, and religious/economic are binaries that are not simply modern but apply to the pre-modern world as well.

All of these assumptions are dubious. As the ferment of political theologies of the last few decades has made abundantly clear, Jesus’ message was not inherently apolitical or asocial; the Kingdom of God was directly relevant to the kingdoms of the world. The Kingdom of God did not have to come to resemble the kingdoms of this world in order to become social or political. There is no good reason to assume that Jesus’ teachings must be adjusted to address society as a whole in order to move from the purely religious to the social. Firstly, “society as a whole” is a modern Western concept; secondly, religion as something separate from political and social life is also modern. Indeed, as historian John Bossy notes, the modern concepts of religion and society are like twins, both created when the early modern state was creating a unitary society governed by a sovereign out of the medieval patchwork of *societates*, semi-autonomous guilds, clans, cities and other organic associations with overlapping jurisdictions and loyalties. Bossy writes that the development of the modern idea of society was “a successor effect of the transition in ‘religion’, whose history it reproduced. One cannot therefore exactly call Religion and Society twins; but in other respects they are like the sexes according to Aristophanes, effects of the fission of a primitive whole, yearning towards one another across a great divide.”<sup>38</sup> The “primitive whole”

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<sup>37</sup> Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1985), 171. The fact that such fission is commonly associated with the Treaty of Westphalia

of which Bossy writes is the pre-modern inseparability of “religion” from life as a whole. *Religio* in the pre-modern West was a sub-virtue of the cardinal—not theological—virtue of justice which did not belong to a separate, “supernatural” realm of activity; not until the dawn of the seventeenth century was *religio* identified as *supernaturalis*.<sup>39</sup> There was a division of labor between kings and priests, but not between “religion” and “politics.” As Aquinas makes plain, both *religio* and acts of governance were directed toward the same end, the enjoyment of God, and right *religio* was necessary for good governance.<sup>40</sup>

Troeltsch, following Weber, attempted to resist the Marxist or Durkheimian reduction of religion to the social, and so defined religion as essentially asocial and belonging to the realm of value. Politics, on the other hand, is defined in terms of influencing the leadership of a state, that is, the one and only public realm, where instrumental rationality holds sway.<sup>41</sup> Religion, then, is an essentially interior impulse that can have an effect on society and the political, but if religion seeks to be influential, it must come to terms with, and accommodate itself to, the sphere of social life, which is a given and runs according to its own logic. Those who accept this process of accommodation are church types; those who reject it to maintain the purity of religion are sect types.

To accept Troeltsch’s terms and to fit them into a church/world duality is to straightjacket the different possibilities of church engagement with the world. Contrary to Curran’s contention that being church type is normative for Catholicism, Troeltsch’s is a distinctly liberal Protestant project that locates the essence of religion in an asocial interiority, rather than in the daily engagement of the Christian with the material world that is penetrated by the grace of God. In

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(1648) is an irony not lost on me. “Westphalia” is often used as shorthand for the system of nation-states that superseded Christendom.

<sup>39</sup> Ernst Feil, “From the Classical *Religio* to the Modern *Religion*: Elements of a Transformation between 1550 and 1650,” in *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality*, ed., Michel Despland and Gérard Vallée (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University, 1992), 35.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949), 60 [Bk. II, ch. 3]; also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II. q.10, a.10. I treat the genealogy of the concept of religion at much greater length in my book *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University, 2009), ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Weber’s famous essay, “Politics as a Vocation,” defines politics this way: “We wish to understand by politics only the leadership, or the influencing of the leadership, of a political association, hence today, of a state.” The state, in turn, is defined thus: “A state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Pol-itics-as-a-Vocation.pdf>.

Troeltsch's scheme, the social is equated with the one society bounded by the state, thus eliminating from view any other kind of social and political action that tries to imagine a plurality of social spaces. Thus Troeltsch ignores everything from the complex medieval space of overlapping *societates*; to Catholic experiments in corporatism and distributism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; to the English pluralism of John Neville Figgis and G.D.H. Cole in the 1920s and 1930s; to Rowan Williams' call for recognition of different spaces of law in Britain; to contemporary calls for "radical democracy," a recognition of a pluralism of grassroots experiments in self-governance that go beyond the dreary exercise of voting for one of two corporation-sponsored candidates once every four years. Rather than assuming that there is one "world" out there, one dominant culture that we must either embrace or reject, it is both more empirically correct and theologically faithful to see and imagine multiple ways of engaging with God's good creation while attempting to transform sin into the Kingdom of God.

Vatican II does not represent the embrace of the church type over the sect type, the turn from detachment from the world to living in the world. The treatment of the church/world relationship in the documents of Vatican II is carefully nuanced. All four of the above valences of the church/world duality can be found in *Gaudium et spes*, with different approaches to each. In the preface, the "world of men" is defined as "the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theater of man's history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ."<sup>42</sup> As in option B, the world is here the whole of creation, essentially good, fallen and redeemed. But *Gaudium et spes* also uses "world" to mean that part of creation that stands outside the Church (A): the Council "sets forth certain general principles for the proper fostering of this mutual exchange and assistance in concerns which are in some way common to the world and the Church."<sup>43</sup> In the same paragraph, the Council also expresses "high esteem" for the way that "other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities" are working toward the same goal, and expresses confidence that the Catholic Church can be "helped by the world" in preparing the ground for the gospel.<sup>44</sup> The "world" in *Gaudium et spes* is also used in sense C, as referring to the temporal activities of

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<sup>42</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*, no. 2, [www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

<sup>43</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 40.

<sup>44</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 40.



economics, politics, and social life; this is what is meant when the Church appeals to those who live “in the world,” as in “the Church requires the special help of those who live in the world, are versed in different institutions and specialties, and grasp their innermost significance in the eyes of both believers and unbelievers.”<sup>45</sup> These temporal activities or “earthly affairs” possess a certain sort of autonomy. “If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy.”<sup>46</sup> The document goes on to claim the “rightful independence of science” and deplores those who consider faith and science to be mutually opposed. The document is then careful to distinguish true autonomy from false, rejecting the idea that “created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator.”<sup>47</sup> This paragraph is then followed by an admonition to reject the world, in the sense of D. “That is why Christ’s Church, trusting in the design of the Creator, acknowledges that human progress can serve man’s true happiness, yet she cannot help echoing the Apostle’s warning: ‘Be not conformed to this world’ (Rom 12:2). Here by the world is meant that spirit of vanity and malice which transforms into an instrument of sin those human energies intended for the service of God and man.”<sup>48</sup> *Gaudium et spes* thus presents a nuanced approach to church and world. It calls us to recognize the goodness of creation, fallen and redeemed by Christ, and cooperate with non-Catholics to transform earthly affairs while resisting being conformed to the evils of the world.

The devil, of course, is in the details. What does it mean to say, “The council brings to mankind light kindled from the Gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder”?<sup>49</sup> Are there Christian approaches to economics, for example, or do Christians learn economics from the “science” of economics the way everyone else does? Do Christians try to create different economies, or is there one “economy”—one “world”—in which we all participate, for better or for worse?

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<sup>45</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 36.

<sup>47</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 36.

<sup>48</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 37. The Latin text of *Gaudium et spes* has *saeculo* for “world” here, whereas the texts cited for senses A, B, and C all use a declension of *mundus*. Paul, in the cited text from Romans 12, uses a derivation of *aeon* instead of *kosmos*; the Gospel of John, on the other hand, uses *kosmos* for both the positive and negative senses of “world.”

<sup>49</sup> Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution*, no. 3.

**WESTPHALIA TODAY**

Answering such questions in the abstract leads to distorting oversimplifications about the embrace or rejection of “the world.” What interests me about Westphalia is that it provides an occasion for reflection on church and world in the concrete. The picture we see is complex. In 1952, there was not much contact with the non-Catholic world (A). There were no non-Catholics in Westphalia, and as in many other Catholic environments pre-Vatican II, Catholic identity was a source of pride, in both the positive and negative senses of the word. Clericalism and a stifling uniformity were often symptoms of this detachment from the non-Catholic world. Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue in the post-Vatican II Church are unqualified gains.

At the same time, Westphalia in 1952 was not at all disengaged from the natural world (B) or the temporal affairs of economic and social life (C). Indeed, in some ways Westphalia was more engaged with the world than are many Catholics post-Vatican II, when the collapse of Catholic social action organizations and the move to the suburbs limited the temporal engagement of many American Catholics to voting. Economics for the people of Westphalia in 1952 was not an abstruse discipline dominated by experts to whom one must defer; it was a community project of cooperative ventures that required the active participation of all the members of the body of Christ in Westphalia, their active involvement in each other’s lives. “The economy” was not an abstract and incomprehensible unity of which Westphalia was a tiny and insignificant part, buffeted daily by decisions made far away by people of which one had no understanding and over which one had no control; economy was simply the sum of face-to-face transactions that one had with neighbors and fellow communicants. The people of Westphalia were profoundly engaged with the world. They grew food and/or knew where it came from. Commodities were not abstractions that appeared on shelves out of nowhere, and profits on services like the garage and the beauty parlor did not disappear into the ether of “the financial system” but circulated as credit among the members of the community, who had to earn each other’s trust. For better and for worse, people were in each other’s business, in all senses of that word. By no means were they “detached from the world.”

Westphalia has changed, along with both the Church and rural America. The school is closed; the Credit Union moved to Harlan; the Co-op is gone. People shop at the Wal-Mart in Denison, and it is not an occasion for socializing. “We still have our church but young people grow up, graduate and move on because there are no jobs here. Large farms are becoming more prevalent. Not good for keeping a small town prosperous.” According to another longtime resident, Fr. Duren predicted this. “He said back in the ‘50s how the fam-

ily farms would be bought up by corporations and here it is today—it's a different world in all respects." St. Boniface Parish in Westphalia shares a priest with two other towns. In some ways, this is a gain. People appreciate the new role of the parish council, and one parishioner reports that now "the people of the parish have a say in what goes on—not only in parish life but in family life also." But all who responded to my questionnaire report some version of the following: "The feeling of community life is now very different with less cooperation from the members." "Religion is sort of on the back burner for a lot of the people." And this summary, "Most of what was gained by hard work and vision has been lost in this community. We have our church and clubhouse and ball park. I think as time progressed people didn't hold on to their vision of a prospering community and we lost it."

The causes of the decline that Westphalia shares with much of rural America are many. They include the enormous concentration of the power of agribusinesses and government policies that have, especially since the 1970s, favored corporate interests in agriculture.<sup>50</sup> Beyond rural America, consumerism has detached people from production and producers. We talk of "the global economy" increasing interaction among people, but the reality is of increasing detachment from the material world and from each other.<sup>51</sup> As Wendell Berry has written, we have given proxies to corporations to produce all of our food, clothing, and shelter, and are rapidly giving proxies to corporations and the state to provide education, health care, child care, and all sorts of services that local communities used to provide. As Berry says, "Our major economic practice, in short, is to delegate the practice to others."<sup>52</sup> The post-Vatican II era is, in this sense, characterized not by engagement but a profound disengagement with the world.

The recent movement to promote locally grown food and community-supported agriculture (CSA) shows that, in some ways, Westphalia was ahead of, not behind, the times. Nostalgia, however, is not the point. The solution today is not to try to recreate Westphalia in 1952. Westphalia can, nevertheless, contribute to the "vision" of a prospering community to which the resident last cited above referred. Ideas about how to engage the world will vary with each different context. But the church should not abandon the hope that the followers of Christ can contribute distinctive visions of how to en-

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> I discuss this in more detail in my book *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Wendell Berry, *Citizenship Papers* (Washington, DC: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2003), 64.

gauge the temporal order, how to create new spaces of engagement with earthly life that do not simply bow to the inevitability of “the world.”

What matters about Westphalia, in other words, is not simply the town itself, but the fact that *World Neighbors* told the story. Today, the geography textbooks my children use in our Catholic school are the same as those used in public schools. They learn about “the economy” as if it were simply out there, a given fact obeying its own laws. *World Neighbors*, on the other hand, covers economics in a chapter entitled “Sharing Goods Through Trade.” There, Catholic school students learned that God has distributed treasures and skills in different ways so that we must interact with each other to get what we need. Those engaged in trade should seek first to supply others’ needs, and only take a reasonable profit. Advertisers should not lie. Prices should be set according to the principle of the Just Price, not supply and demand. The “Christian merchant” will pay good wages, allow fair working hours, let his workers have some say in the management of the business, and let them own shares in the business, for “Christ says that the hireling shepherd runs away when the sheep are in danger.”<sup>53</sup> The text acknowledges the battle is uphill: “in American business life, religion is not a great power. Even Catholics have largely lost the sense of obeying Christ in everyday life. Church is too often thought to be for Sunday, and religion is limited to saying one’s prayers.”<sup>54</sup> But the text hopes to provide a vision of a different world, to spur the imaginations of young people to create economic spaces where the eternal breaks into the temporal, to resist simply passively accepting “the economy” as if it were fated and impervious to the impact of the gospel. The book’s foreword announces that it was “designed to show the Church at work in the world, and to study human beings in their spiritual and religious aspects as well as in their ability to produce economic and material wealth.”<sup>55</sup>

What it would mean to be “the Church at work in the world” today must surely include working alongside other people of good will from other faiths and none. But it also must mean overcoming the temptation to separate “religion” from everyday life and to accept dominant systems as given. Today’s Christians can take inspiration from previous attempts, like that of Westphalia, to knit together our spiritual lives with our material lives, and thus become more “worldly.”<sup>M</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 189-92.

<sup>54</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, 190.

<sup>55</sup> Bedier, *World Neighbors*, ii.

The Journal of Moral Theology (JMT) focuses on contemporary issues in Catholic moral theology, offering scholarly articles deeply rooted in the Catholic Tradition. You'll also find theological treatments of modern debates covering a range of topics, from economics to psychology. Leading Catholic moral theologians like Michael J. Gorman, James F. Keenan, and Lisa Sowle Cahill address questions of ethics, discuss Christology, study influential Catholic figures, and examine Catholic social teaching. JMT was first published in 2012 and is sponsored by the Fr. William T. Cavanaugh: Westphalia and Back: Complexifying the Church-World Duality in Catholic Thought. Laurie Johnston: The "Signs of the Times" and their Readers in Wartime and in Peace. The Catholic Church is an ancient religious institution boasting over a billion members worldwide. As such, Catholicism is the largest Christian ecclesiastical body in the world. Because of this alone, it is important to have an accurate understanding of the Roman Catholic Church's history and beliefs. What Is Catholicism? - History, Tradition & Beliefs. The Roman Catholic Church is an ancient religious institution boasting over a billion members worldwide. As such, it is the largest Christian ecclesiastical body in the world. Because of this alone, it is important to have an accurate understanding of the Roman Catholic Church's history and beliefs. The Catholic Church operates on a hierarchy with the pope at the top and laity at the bottom. Despite the bottom-rung status, the laity compose the majority of the Church. Lay people can act as everyday ministers of the faith, bringing the principles of Christianity and Catholicism to work, school, and home. Lay people can also take part in some of the sacred rituals of the Church by being altar servers, lectors, and lay ministers who can help distribute the Holy Eucharist during Mass and bring Holy Communion to shut-ins and those in hospital. Members of the laity belong to the same religion and reap the same benefits through living a life of faith and devotion as do members of the clergy, even if they occupy a lower rung in the sacred hierarchy. The Orthodox Church has its spiritual center in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople). The Ecumenical Patriarch of the Church of Constantinople is considered "first among equals" in Orthodox Christianity. The Orthodox and Catholic churches are at peace with each other. 2. What are the main differences between Catholic & Orthodox rituals? Tonsure of the five new monks of the Seraphim-Sarov monastery in the village of Novomakarovo in the Gribovsky district of the Voronezh region. The tonsure takes place once a year during Lent. Andrey Arkhipov/Sputnik. There are many differences between Catholic and Orthodox rituals.