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THE PATHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

M. D. Litonjua
College of Mount St. Joseph

The global pedophilia crisis in the Catholic Church poses critical questions of inquiry and explanation to the sociological study of religion. Sociology studies religion as a social institution. The basic sociological insight is that as groups grow in size they undergo institutionalization for their survival and maintenance. But in doing so, the social structures of religion can also become pathological and, in theological terms, sinful. Delineating the processes of religious institutionalization and of the "pathologization" of religion sheds sociological light on the pedophilia scandal, less on the abuse of children by priests and more on the cover-up of the crimes by bishops, which is the more institutional feature of the crisis.

The American sociologist of religion Thomas O'Dea (1961) famously stated that "religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalization." Religion arises from an irreducible experience of ultimacy and the holy, drastically different from the experiences of the ordinary prosaic workaday world. But for this experience to be available to successive generations of followers, it must be rendered routine and stable in belief-systems, symbols, rituals, and organization. The sacred must be embodied in profane structures. Thus, religion in its very core involves an antinomy. In bringing together two radically heterogeneous elements, ultimacy and concrete social institutions, the sacred and the profane, this necessary institutionalization of religion entails a fundamental tension that can result in the pathological perversion of religion itself.

In his book on the crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America, following the clerical pedophilia scandal, Peter Steinfels (2003: 14), who was editor of *Commonweal,* as well as, senior religion correspondent for the *New York Times,* puts his own twist, by laying

down his working premise: "The Catholic Church can succeed as an institution while failing as a church. But it cannot succeed as a church while failing as an institution." Church needs institution; both are necessary, but the institution must serve the church; the institution is the means and the church the end. But when means and end are inverted, when the institution becomes the priority, when church is subordinated to institution, the more the church succeeds as an institution the more it fails as church. The institution has become pathological; the church has become dys functional.

Sociology is the social science *par excellence* of social structures and social institutions. Sociology can throw a light on the necessity of the institutionalization of religion, at the same time that it can show why and how religious institutions can become perverse and pathological. These are the twin aims of this article. All throughout the article my example of religion and religious institution will be the Roman Catholic religion and the Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a member and therefore with which I am most familiar. Everything that I say about them should apply, *mutatis mutandis,* to other religions and religious institutions.

The Necessity of Institutionalization

Religion as a Group Phenomenon

For sociology the basic thing about religion is that it is a group phenomenon. This is captured in the classic Durkheimian definition of religion: a system of beliefs and practices related to the sacred that unites believers into a moral community. Contained in this definition are the four c's of religion: creed, code, cult, and church. But before anything else, religion as a group phenomenon shares the characteristics of all social groups, exhibits patterns of interaction that all social groups manifest, and is subject to processes that all social reality undergoes with all their attendant contradictions, dilemmas, and conflicts. While the subject matter of religion differs from the subject matter of all other groups, although it claims a supernatural source of and sanction for its beliefs, practices, and rituals, yet as the religious group organizes itself and sets about doing what it believes it should be doing, religion is like all social groups. At the level of goal establishment, agreement on norms, role specification, status differentiation, group

identification and commitment – at the level of organization and structure – religion is no different from other groups.

Ronald Johnstone (1997: 38-43) specifies five fundamental prerequisites of group life that also apply to religion: recruitment and reproduction, socialization, producing satisfactory levels of goods and services, preserving order, and maintaining a sense of purpose.

The first challenge any group faces is the infusion of new members. Membership must be continuously replenished, and this is usually done through reproduction or through various means of recruitment. In most cases, children become adherents of the religion they are born into, thus following the religion of their parents. Others in their adult years are converted into becoming members of another religion. Islam through military conquest and Christianity through colonization acquired new territories and thereby expanded the number of their believers. Traditional missionary work was aimed at proselytization, the conversion of new members to the faith. The classic example of the failure to meet this first basic requisite of group life is the Shakers. Because they believed in the strict separation of the sexes and in complete sexual continence, the Shakers could only grow through adult conversion to the faith. Not surprisingly, today they are practically an extinct religious group.

Not only must new members be recruited, but they need to be socialized. New members must be taught the teachings of the faith, inculcated with the norms and practices of the group, formed into a moral community with its distinctive religious culture. Thus, religion emphasizes the importance of the family, the primary agent of socialization in society and church. Religious formation and education in all its various forms are given high priority. Catechesis, formal schooling, Sunday programs, participation in church rituals, books and other publications are designed to further the socialization of members, to aid in their growth and maturation as members of the faith.

The third requisite for the continued existence of a group is the production and distribution of goods and services at levels that will satisfy the minimal demands of its members. For society as a whole, this task is usually met by the economy. For voluntary associations such as contemporary religious groups, it means giving members

what they became members for, what they are longing for. This might mean ultimate goods and services, like eternal salvation and the forgiveness of sins, or the satisfaction of more intermediate needs, such as religious fellowship, sacramental worship, religious formation of children, comfort over grief, reassurance in spite of problems. In other words and however crass it sounds, religion, like any other group, must "deliver the goods" if it is to remain viable.

An interesting question is being studied in connection with the satisfactory provision of goods and services by religious groups. In the first place, Robert Wuthnow (1988) has reconstructed the social and cultural milieu of American religion since World War II, and has indicated that American religion has undergone a fundamental restructuring. Instead of lines of division separating different religious denominations from each other, there has come about a growing polarization between religious liberals and religious conservatives that cuts across denominational affiliations. People can shop around and select, therefore, the churches or congregations they wish to belong to in terms of their own liberal or conservative views and according to the liberal or conservative goods and services that are offered.

Utilizing rational choice theory, Robert Finke and Rodney Stark (1992: 238; see also Stark and Finke 2000) add to this analysis by pointing out that in the religious economy of the United States, liberal churches have significantly lost membership while conservative religions are experiencing growth. One reason for this is that "*religious organizations are stronger to the degree that they impose significant costs in terms of sacrifice and even stigma upon their members*. . . . People tend to value religion on the basis of how costly it is to belong – the more one must sacrifice in order to be in good standing, the more valuable the religion. A major reason people rate religion this way is that as religious bodies ask less of their members their ability to reward their members declines proportionately." Put in terms of the third requisite for group life, the goods and services offered by conservative religions in exchange for stricter adherence to doctrine and morals is valued more. The goods and services offered by liberal congregations do not cost as much and could be acquired through other venues.

Finke and Stark (2005: 282-83) conclude that

> Humans want their religion to be sufficiently potent, vivid, and compelling so that it can offer them rewards of great magnitude. People seek a religion that is capable of miracles and that imparts order and sanity to the human condition. The religious organizations that maximize these aspects of religion, however, also demand the highest price in terms of what the individual must do to qualify for these rewards. . . . [But] people are forever paying the costs in the here and now while most of the rewards are to be realized elsewhere and later. As a result, humans are prone to backslide, to get behind on their payments. . . . [P]eople will always be in favor of a modest reduction in their costs. In this fashion, humans begin to bargain with their churches for lower tension and fewer sacrifices. They usually succeed . . .
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> There comes a point, however, when a religious body has become so worldly that its rewards are few and lacking in plausibility. When hell is gone, can heaven's departure be far behind?

The fourth requisite of group life is the maintenance of order. For society at large, the task of governance is discharged by political institutions. From the point of view of this requisite, religion is also a political institution. It has a hierarchy of authority, it exercises power, control, coercion, and influence, it motivates members to pursue group goals, it lays down norms by which members have to abide, it coordinates and supervises roles, it employs rewards and sanctions. The ultimate penalty is excommunication, exclusion from participation in the life of the church community. It has even employed heresy trials and inquisitions which meted out capital punishment in various forms. Today, there are three major types of church government: the episcopal type in which authority rests with the clergy and bishops; the presbyterian type in which authority is wielded by representative committees of clergy and church members; and the congregational type in which organizational authority ultimately resides in local church members.

Lastly, for a group to survive it has to maintain a sense of identity and purpose. A society needs loyal and committed citizens to pick up arms and risk death in battle in the face of enemy invasions. Similarly, religion needs sufficient loyalty and commitment on the part of its members for them to withstand disagreements, problems, corruption, and scandals that inevitably afflict all groups, for them to remain in the face of conflicts both internal and external. This is the great symbolic value of martyrdom; it is the ultimate sign of loyalty and commitment. That

is why it was said during the Roman persecution of Christians that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity.

"In short," Ronald Johnstone (1997: 38) asserts, "a group is a group is a group."

Three Types of Authority

Max Weber's analysis of the different bases of authority in society throws further light on the social processes that all groups go through. Authority is found in all groups and societies. There is no society that we know of that does not have authority. Authority means legitimate power or domination, the legitimate ways on how things are done in society. The central sociological question concerns the basis on which power or domination is made legitimate to followers, to members of a group or society. Weber constructs ideal-types to illustrate three different bases of authority: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal.

Traditional authority is based on time-honored routines. There is an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them. Thus, the authority of kings and queens is traditional, based at one time on their divine right to rule, and the practice of the first-born inheriting the throne rests on accepted tradition.

Authority legitimized by charisma, meaning gift, consists in the devotion of followers to the outstanding characteristics of their leader, which exceptional qualities sanction the normative order established for the group. Weber's understanding of charismatic authority is sociological because it presupposes the existence of a group whose followers see outstanding characteristics in their leader, and because of which they follow his directives. The popular understanding of charismatic personality is psychological; it simply means the possession of some outstanding characteristics that are admired but not necessarily followed. To illustrate the difference: For most of us, Jim Jones was not a charismatic person; instead of admiring and following him, perhaps we considered him a madman. For his followers, however, for the members of the People's Temple, he was a charismatic leader so much so that they obeyed him and drank the Kool-Aid laced with cyanide. The result was the mass suicide at Guyana in 1978.

Rational-legal authority rests on the belief in the rationality of the commanded action and in the legality of the enacted rules, as well as, in the legitimacy of the exercising authority. It is characteristic of modern organized groups or societies, because it meets the requirements of instrumental reason and positive law. People stop for a red traffic light because it is the rational thing to do at a busy intersection, and it is the law. We buckle up before we drive; it is the law and it saves lives in accidents.

"Charisma is the greatest revolutionary force," Weber (1968: 53) wrote. Many of the upheavals in world history, for good or for bad, were brought about by charismatic giants who were able to harness energies and mobilize people to pursue their visions: Moses, Jesus, Alexander the Great, Muhammad, Napoleon, Hitler, Mao Zedong, to mention a few. What distinguishes charisma as a revolutionary force is that it leads to changes in the minds of actors; it causes a "subjective or internal reorientation." Such changes lead to "a radical alteration of the central attitudes and direction of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward different problems of the world" (Weber 1968: 245).

But the difficulty with charismatic authority is that it is unstable and fragile. What happens when the leader dies and the charisma is lost? Most groups based on charismatic authority simply cease to exist and vanish. For some groups, charismatic authority becomes traditional authority; they continue to do things the way their founder instructed them to. For groups to succeed, however, authority must be transformed into rational-legal. When the charismatic leader dies and the group lays down rules of succession, it has taken the first step toward rational-legal authority; it begins to undergo the process that Weber called "the routinization of charisma." Religion needs rational-legal authority to continue to exist. Religion needs bureaucracy to maintain itself. Religion needs institutionalization to succeed and to expand.

For Weber, the emergence of the modern world was due to the spread of rationalization, resulting in "the disenchantment of the world." Formal rationality which involves means-end calculation has come to define social action in the modern world. What is calculable, predictable, what can be controlled, and, therefore, what is efficient are the values that dominate the modern worldview. Substantive rationality which questions and evaluates both ends

and means has become less significant than formal rationality which is concerned only with the most efficient means. From the economy to the law, from the arts to religion, the values and norms of formal rationality have swept across all institutions. Rationalization has tamed charisma, is now driving social change, and has replaced charisma as the modern revolutionary force.

The Independent Variable of Size

What necessitates the shift to rational-legal authority? Success for a group means increasing size. But increasing size confers problems on the group. Johnstone (1997: 43-45) lists five problems following increasing size for a group. First, as groups increase in size, the degree of consensus among members concerning goals and especially norms declines. Second, because of more diversity in membership that follows increased size, deviance from norms and violation of rules becomes more prevalent. Third, the ratio of formal to informal norms increases because of the necessity of writing down beliefs and principles for the enlarged membership who can no longer communicate face to face. Fourth, roles become more specialized and growing autonomy for roles develops. Fifth, there is a greater need for coordination; coordinators gain greater knowledge and more power so that stratification ensues.

Increasing size, in other words, is not only a matter of quantity; it brings about qualitative change. It is interesting to note that Georg Simmel, a contemporary of Weber, considered the increase from two to three as the most important change that can happen to a group (Ritzer 2000: 160-61). A dyad does not achieve meaning beyond the individuals involved, and does not have an independent group structure but the two separable individuals. The addition of a third person causes a radical, fundamental, and qualitative change. A triad has the possibility of meaning beyond the individuals involved, and it is likely to develop an independent group structure. New social roles, like arbitrator or negotiator, become possible; conflict – divide and rule – can be fostered; a stratification system and an authority structure can emerge.

Experience validates this insight. The most dramatic change that happens to a married couple is the birth of their first child. There might be other children later on, but nothing can compare with the excitement with the first child. The most painful shock that

can happen to a married couple is the first affair of a spouse. There might be other affairs later on, but nothing can compare with the trauma learning of the first affair.

At any rate, the movement from dyad to triad is essential to the development of social structures and the emergence of society. As a group increases its size, from three to hundreds to thousands and even perhaps to millions, it undergoes both quantitative and qualitative changes, and the basis of authority for such a group increasingly becomes rational-legal. It cannot be otherwise.

The Law of Bureaucratization

A group is successful, its membership grows, it increases its size. At a certain point in its growth, the group reaches critical mass and becomes a formal organization. What was once a group characterized by intimate ties, informal communication, face-to-face interaction is now too unwieldy. The group has to be more formally organized: leadership is established, tasks are delineated, roles are specified, rules and regulations are laid down. The group has become a bureaucracy.

Max Weber (1968: 220) is considered the father of bureaucracy which he considered "the purest type of exercise of legal authority." While the word bureaucracy usually conjures up negative images of unyielding and rigid bureaucrats, time-consuming processes, silly red tape, and even perhaps of incompetence and corruption, bureaucracy for Max Weber is the most efficient means of managing large numbers of people and resources. He (Weber 1968: 223) was very clear:

> From a purely technical point of view, a bureaucracy is capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency, and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of the organization and for those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks.

Furthermore, he outlined the major characteristics of bureaucracy. The first is division of labor and specialization. Work is divided according to specific tasks, and specialists are assigned to specific duties as their sphere of competence. Job titles and job descriptions

specify who is responsible for each activity. Second is a hierarchy of authority. Positions are arranged so that each position is under the control and supervision of a higher position. The top position has overall responsibility for the chains of command. The third characteristic is rules and regulations. All activities and operations are governed by abstract rules and procedures. The rules are designed to cover every possible situation that might arise. The object is to standardize all activities. Fourth is impersonal relations. Interactions are supposed to be guided by the rules rather than by personal feelings. Consistent application of impersonal rules is intended to eliminate particularism and favoritism. The fifth is career, tenure, and technical qualifications. Candidates for positions are selected on the basis of educational credentials and technical qualifications. Once selected, a person advances on a ladder by means of achievement and seniority. Sixth is the separation of person and position. Unlike charismatic authority where the position dies with the leader, bureaucratic incumbents do not own their positions. Positions always remain parts of the organization to be filled up when vacancies occur. And the seventh characteristic is records in writing. Administrative rules, acts, and decisions are formulated and kept in writing.

Most people can agree that large numbers of resources, human and otherwise, can be most efficiently managed by bureaucracies. It is impossible to imagine how the tasks of a modern government or military can otherwise be handled. But does religion need to be bureaucratized? It would seem that religion and bureaucracy are incompatible.

Max Weber, in his capacity as a sociologist and with his competency limited to what is empirical, considered religion as originating from charisma. In fact, more than others, the sphere of religion is prone to manifestations of charismatic creativity and innovation. The religious prophet, more than the priest, embodies the purity of charismatic authority. His claim to authority is based on personal revelation, and he exerts his authority by virtue of his personal gifts. Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Luther were preeminently charismatic authorities. The religious founder is the paradigmatic charismatic authority.

But it is also in the sphere of religion that the processes of demystification and rationality become more prominent. With the

death of the religious prophet and for the group to continue to exist, with increasing size and diverse membership as measures of its success, the original religious charisma undergoes routinization; the church acquires the trappings of a formal organization, it becomes a bureaucracy. It is a social law that all groups are subject to; it is a social process that religious groups undergo. Compare the original group gathered around Jesus and the Catholic Church today numbering in millions spread across every country of the globe. However much we long for the intimacy and fellowship that must have pervaded the original group, the Catholic Church today can only be governed in unity as one big bureaucracy.

Alfred Loisy, the biblical scholar condemned as a Modernist by the Catholic Church, is said to have pointed out that while Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, what resulted was the church. This has usually been taken to be an indictment of the institutional church. But it could very well be understood as expressing a sociological insight. Once it was realized that millennial expectations were not forthcoming, that the end of times was in the distant future, the Christian faith had to become a church in order to survive and flourish. But it is still amazing how fast the process of institutionalization was after Christianity had obtained the political and military support of the Roman Empire. Twelve years after its legalization by Constantine, the bishops of the church were convened at Nicaea in 325 to unify the faith and the empire. Here is how the historian Eusebius sets the scene of the banquet that marked the conclusion of the council, "the circumstances of which were splendid beyond description": "Detachments of the body-guard and other troops surrounded the entrance of the palace with drawn swords, and through the midst of these the men of God proceeded without fear into the innermost of the imperial apartments, in which some were the emperor's own companions at table, while others reclined at couches arranged at either side. One might have thought that a picture of Christ's kingdom was thus shadowed forth, and a dream rather than reality" (see Carroll 2000: 192). A far cry indeed from the band of peasants gathered at Jesus' feet. In fact, before Vatican II it was a matter of pride that the Catholic Church was compared favorably with General Motors as the best run corporations in the world.

But does not bureaucracy stifle and suffocate the original religious charisma that gave rise to the religious group? Gregory Baum (1987: 234-35) addresses the problem:

> Two logics are operative in every organization, the logic of mission and the logic of maintenance. The logic of mission deals with the aim and function of an organization, the purpose for the sake of which it has been established; the logic of maintenance deals with the well-being of the organization itself, its upkeep, security, and perpetuation in the years to come. Both of these logics are essential. Contrary to some people's idealistic expectations, an institution cannot survive if it overlooks the logic of maintenance. At the same time, the two logics are inevitably in some tension. . . .
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> When the concern for the institution's well-being begins to overshadow the commitment to the institution's function, sociologists have argued, a dialectic begins to operate, according to which the excessive concern for maintenance becomes in fact dysfunctional and undermines the institution's well-being.

The greatest danger that bureaucracies are prone to is what Robert K. Merton (1968: 253) calls "goal displacement." The social structures of bureaucracy are a means to an end. When rules and regulations become more important than organizational goals, when people are sacrificed for the good of the institution, when the bureaucracy becomes the end in itself, then the social institution, even a religious one, has become pathological. The letter can extinguish the spirit of the law. That is why social structures, even of religion, can become structures of sin, can constitute social sin, can be sinful. This is the underlying rationale behind *ecclesia semper reformanda,* church always in need of reform.

The Pathology of Institutionalization

The Dilemmas of Religious Institutionalization

The process that Weber referred to as routinization is designated today by sociologists as institutionalization, the process by which the collective life of a group develops into a stable matrix of statutes, roles, and norms, evolves, in other words, into a social institution. Any group that fails to institutionalize its collective life will simply not survive. Institutionalization serves the ideals and goals of the group, which can only be furthered if the group survives and mobilizes its resources. The material interests of the group, the time, energy, and financial resources the members have invested, can also only be served if the group continues to exist, increase, and expand. This is true for religious groups as well.

Thomas O'Dea (1961: 30-39) asserts that "religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalization." Increasing size is the best indicator of a group's success. Religion needs institutionalization to succeed and survive. Increasing size and growth demand institutionalization, but it tends to change the character of the religious movement by creating dilemmas that must be faced. Institutionalization, therefore, poses the danger of goal displacement, and tempts the religious institution to be pathological. O'Dea discusses five major dilemmas.

The Dilemma of Mixed Motivation. The original members of a religious group gathered around a charismatic authority are purely motivated, totally devoted to their leader, and wholly dedicated to their cause. They willingly subordinate their needs and desires for the sake of the goals of the group. They are willing to make sacrifices, even perhaps the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, to further the group's cause. They are unquestioning in their acceptance of their leader's authority and his teachings, single-minded in the pursuit of their beliefs, and unqualified in their dedication to the leader and their cause.

As the group becomes successful and increases its size, membership becomes more diverse. There can be different reasons for joining the group. With the development of a stable institutional structure, there emerges the desire to occupy the more creative, responsible, prestigious, and powerful positions. Already in Jesus' time, the disciples wanted to know who was greatest in the kingdom of God (Matthew 18: 1), with James and John requesting that they sit, one at his right and the other at his left, when he comes into his glory (Mark 10: 35-37). Such self-oriented motivations can easily be overcome by a single command of the charismatic leader. In a religious bureaucracy, however, ambition and competition can be rife, stimulating jealousies and personality conflicts, if not manipulations and outright power-plays.

Mixed motivation usually occurs when concerns about personal security emerge. Religious institutions do need to provide for the economic security and well-being of their fulltime professionals for them to maintain high morale and commitment. It is only when these professionals are satisfied and fulfilled in their work that they can be expected to use their creative talents and abilities, to sacrifice time, effort, and themselves for the goals of the

organization. These secondary concerns are important for these members, and ultimately important for the good of the organization as a whole. The dilemma occurs when these secondary concerns overshadow the original goals of the group and the teachings of its leader. The problem for the religious organization is that these secondary matters can take on primary importance and subvert the original sense of mission of the group.

The Symbolic Dilemma. Symbols have the highest importance in religion. Human relationship to the transcendent can only be mediated through symbols. Religious beliefs, rituals, norms all revolve around the symbolic that incarnates the transcendent. A common set of symbols that expresses their religious worldview and ethos binds a religious group into a moral community. The symbols result from the process of objectivation, of projecting the subjective experiences of the group into objective artifacts and behaviors.

With the passage of time, a symbol may become utterly meaningless to current members of a religious group. The original meaning is lost, so that the symbol is treated with indifference. It no longer resonates with the subjective feelings and dispositions of current members. The symbol, therefore, does not enhance the worship experience, is no longer a powerful force that unites and solidifies. It does not create religious mood, religious feelings necessary for ritual, and does not reinforce the religious worldview and ethos.

Religious symbols point to and make present the transcendent. A worse problem happens when the symbol becomes an end in itself, is worshiped for its own sake, and is sacralized. When a symbol is thus prized, instead of the transcendent values it stands for and points to, then it has become alienating. Thus, the very objectivation of religious experience demanded by institutionalization creates the dilemma of alienation. When symbols lose their meaning and power, new ones must be socially constructed; otherwise the religious organization faces internal problems of meaning and belonging.

The Dilemma of Administrative Order. As a religious group increases in size, as its membership grows more diverse, there is a need for order, coordination, and direction. To administer the complex organization that the religious group has become, roles and offices are differentiated and specialized, the hierarchy of

authority is delineated and lengthens, rules and regulations are specified and proliferate. Thus, with institutionalization the religious group sprouts a bureaucracy.

The complexity of the social structure is a necessity. People in complex organizations need guidelines for decision-making. Concrete policies must be established to solve problems and to reach goals. If no policy exists to deal with unusual problems and contingencies, precedents become unwritten rules. The development of complex structures and the elaboration of rules are the natural outgrowth of the need for people, especially office holders, to know how to solve problems and how to deal with unforeseen situations. People, especially at the lower levels, feel a profound need to make decisions with the sanction of those who are in higher authority.

The institutionalization of group life, therefore, aims at efficiency and accountability. The dilemma arises when the articulated policies and complex rules become overly rigid. If the organization is run entirely on rigid rules and regulations, flexibility is reduced and frustrations mount. Ecclesiastical bureaucracies are no less susceptible to red tape, to unwieldy and overcomplicated structures than are government bureaucracies. What is worse is when secrecy comes to cloak how rules were carried out and decisions made, what processes and procedures were followed, who were involved in the outcomes. Secrecy oftentimes hides the violation of human rights and of due process. When transparency disappears and secrecy abounds, when flexibility is lost and accountability is trumped, the dilemma has turned into an outright dysfunction.

The Dilemma of Delimitation. Part of the process of religious routinization is that beliefs are formulated into doctrines and creeds, norms are systematized into codes and laws, religious practices and rituals are formalized into cultic worship, the relatively unstructured community becomes an organized church. The established creed, code, cult, and church set the parameters of religious membership; they delimit what is acceptable to and for the religious group.

This is necessary for two reasons. First, it makes it easier for the expanded membership to know the beliefs of the faith, to put into practice its norms, and to act in worship as one religious

community. New members did not undergo the original religious experience that gave rise to the religion, may not be as purely motivated as its original members, and may not be as committed as the original group. Second, it facilitates passing on the religious tradition to future generations. This is especially true in the task of religious socialization by the family, in the education undertaken and performed by religious schools, and in the religious formation of ministers of the church.

The dilemma of delimitation occurs when the letter of the law becomes more important that its spirit. Doctrine takes priority over faith, rules become more important than conduct, legalisms stifle, suffocate, and kill the life and the spirit, people are sacrificed for the good of the institution. This is the ultimate inversion of religious faith, and this is what is basically wrong with all forms of fundamentalism. This was behind the condemnation made by Jesus of the religious leaders of his time: They have made man for the Sabbath, not the Sabbath for man (Matthew 12: 1-15). They devour the savings of widows and recite long prayers for appearance's sake (Mark 12: 38-40). They bind up heavy loads, hard to carry, to lay on other men's shoulders, while they themselves will not lift a finger to budge them. They declare that if you swear by the temple it means nothing, but if you swear by the gold of the temple one is obligated. They pay tithes on mint and herbs and seeds while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and good faith (Matthew 23: 1-36).

The Dilemma of Power. For a religious group to stay together and maintain its common identity, conformity to the beliefs and values of the group, its norms and rituals, its laws and structures must be ensured. Occasional individual deviations may be tolerated, but deviations from fundamental beliefs, teachings, values, and laws of the religious institution will threaten the institution itself. The larger the group, the more the possibility of deviance, the greater the need for conformity. This is especially true for later generations of believers who may not feel a personal loyalty to the institution and its authority, who may not have fully internalized the faith and its norms, who do not feel compelled to accept the absolute authority of the faith in their lives.

Thus, power has its proper function in a religious institution. It is in service to the community of faith, to uphold its fidelity to

religious truth, and to maintain its continuity with its traditions. It is for service, not for domination. It is for the community, not for personal self-aggrandizement. It seeks to persuade and convert before it acts to coerce and punish.

But power can be perverted. Coercion can be used not to safeguard the faith, but to promote the interests of the office holder. Force can be utilized not for the good of the faithful, but to preserve the name of the institution. More than the allure of sexual pleasure or the security afforded by riches, the thirst for power is the greatest temptation. There is satiation in sex, a limit to wealth, but there is no slaking the thirst for power. The result is totalitarianism in both its secular and religious manifestations. The long history of excommunications, heresy trials, religious inquisitions, and crusades attest to the dilemma of power. The abuses of religious power have brought about untold suffering and tragedy even to the most faithful adherents of the religious institution.

The dilemma of power is aggravated or mitigated by the form of governance the institution takes. In an authoritarian social institution, power and control often become the all-consuming concern of the autocrat, as he clings to them to ensure his continued existence and his prolonged exploitation of others. In the hands of autocrats, absolute power becomes lethal to enemies and to threats. Democratic forms of governance tend to mitigate the dilemma and abuse of power. Reinhold Niebuhr famously stated that "man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." In a democratic institution, there are laws that apply to all, including the leadership; there are procedures and processes that regulate, limit, and spread the democratic use of power and control.

The use of power can easily tip into abuse in the Catholic Church by the mere fact that it is last absolute monarchy on earth. It may no longer be physical coercion and torture, but it is no less terrifying and destructive of reputations, of the well-being of people, and of the future of the Church if the coercion is moral and spiritual. Power can easily become an addiction, and with the codependency it infects to the entire family of Catholicism, it makes the Church itself dysfunctional (Crosby 1991). With the failure of collegiality in the post-Vatican II Church (see Litonjua 2011), meant to correct the imbalance of power in the papacy, the Catholic

Church continues to be as autocratic and patriarchal as ever, simply imposing its will without discussion, consultation, and due process. The grip on institutional power and control is tight and unyielding.

In the wake of the pedophilia crisis in the U. S. Catholic Church that shocked the nation in 2002, Peter Steinfels (2003: 14) offered his assessment under the following working premise: "The Catholic Church can succeed as an institution while failing as a church. But it cannot succeed as a church while failing as an institution." It is a profoundly sociological insight. The Catholic Church can succeed as an institution, that is, its hierarchy wielding unquestioned authority, its pronouncements paid attention to in the corridors of power, its reputation as a well-oiled social machine unsullied. But it can fail as a church, as a sacramental sign of the future reign of God, in its ministry to suffering men, women, and children, and in its mission of justice and peace to the world. The Catholic Church fails in its mission when its leadership and authority are not respected by its members, because they are not responsive to their needs and aspirations, when bishops, priests, and laity do not listen to each other and cooperate with each other in their different roles but common tasks, when its structural and human resources are not deployed to serve and achieve the mission and ministry of the church, when it has become a dysfunctional institution. Thus, the institutional life of the church can be both a hindrance and a necessity to the fulfillment of its mission as church.

Thomas O'Dea suggests that the dilemmas of institutionalization are inherent, unavoidable, and inevitable. The process of institutionalization is a mixed blessing or a necessary curse. For a religion to succeed, it has to attract new members and grow in size; it has to be institutionalized. But a bureaucracy soon develops a life of its own, gains its own rationale for being, becomes an end in itself. Thus, social structures can transform into structures of injustice; social institutions can become social sins.

When Institutions Become Pathological

Social institutions are a mixture of good and bad. Social structures can be the channels of grace, but they can also become the embodiment of evil. There are several reasons why social structures and institutions can become problematic and even pathological.

First, social structures emerge as solutions to problems. But what happens when the original problem no longer exists? A story is told of a mother who used to cut a piece at the end of her pot roast before she cooked it. When asked why, she said she did not know, but her mother used to do it. Her mother gave the same answer. When the first mother was traced three generations back, she answered that she had a big family, that there was not a pan big enough to accommodate the pot roast, so she had to slice the end. As it is passed on to the next generations, the practice, no longer a solution to a problem, became tradition. But tradition is not a reason at all; tradition simply says that it was done in the past, in an endless regression in time, without saying why. Tradition becomes meaningless repetition.

Second, a social structure is a solution to a problem at a particular place in a particular time. But the historical, social, economic, and political conditions that gave rise to the problem may change. The Tapirape of central Brazil, for example, valued small families as an adaptation to their harsh environmental circumstances. A woman should have no more than three children. They practiced infanticide if twins were born, if the third child was of the same sex as the first two children, and if the possible fathers broke certain taboos during pregnancy or in the child's infancy. In the face of changed circumstances, especially after contact with Europeans and their diseases which resulted in severe population losses, the Tapirape chose not to, or could not, change their established patterns of conduct. The population fell to fewer than 100 people from over 1,000. They were on their way to extinction, yet they continued to limit the number of children and to value small families (Ember and Ember 1999: 29). What was adaptive at one time became maladaptive because of the change in social conditions.

A similar process underlies the emergence of the social structures of patriarchy and the subordination of women. As human groups began to live in permanent settlements and to till the land, the greater size and strength of men became economic advantages, and the ability to bear and care for children on the part of women became disadvantages. Thus, women could no longer make an economic contribution to society as significant as they were able to do in hunting and gathering societies. In agricultural

societies, therefore, there emerged stratification based on, among things, gender. With industrialization and especially in a postindustrial society, the biological basis for gender inequality has been undermined, the advantages and disadvantages arising from biological differences have been negated, yet culture and social structures lag behind technology. Patriarchy has become pathological, if not lethal, for women.

Third, social structures are a means to an end. They become problematic if they become ends in themselves. This is very clear from the institution of traffic lights. Traffic lights prevent accidents and save lives. But if fire trucks rushing to douse house fires or ambulances hurrying to bring patients to hospitals were to stop at a red light, they would be endangering lives. Therefore, fire trucks and ambulances with their lights flashing and their sirens blaring are allowed to ignore traffic lights.

The problem is that career people in institutions tend to displace the goals of the institution with institutional survival. This is what Robert K. Merton called "goal displacement." This is especially true when their own careers, their professional well-being depend on the continued existence and well-being of the institution. Rules and regulations become ends in themselves, they are rigidly enforced, there are no exceptions to the rules, people are even sacrificed to uphold the rules. In such cases, the social structures have become problematic; they might even have become pathological, creating bad instead of doing good. For churches, this can happen when the logic of the institution displaces the logic of mission.

Fourth, social structures can become problematic because they have unintended and unforeseen consequences. Utilizing the sociological imagination, a problem is structurally analyzed and a structural solution is implemented. But for all the good intentions of legislators and policy-makers, all the consequences of structural reforms cannot be foreseen, some consequences might be negative even if they are unintended. In some instances, because of unintended consequences, the structural solution becomes worse than the structural problem.

Steven M. Gillon (2000) examines five legal reforms in twentieth-century United States – federal welfare policy, community mental heath, affirmative action, immigration, and

federal election campaign finance – and shows that while they greatly improved American society, they had wildly unforeseen consequences, occasionally positive, often regrettable. To mention a couple, welfare programs are accused of creating dependency especially on the part of women, and affirmative action is criticized for being used as an inexcusable crutch. They certainly were not created to have these effects, but over time and with the human genius for finding loopholes, they may well have come to have these unintended, but undesirable, consequences. Do we despair then of structural reforms because of their unintended consequences? Certainly not. The lesson is the deeply relevant admonition to be aware of the chasm between good intentions and end results, to realize that structural reforms are never definitive and final, that, like the church, *societas semper reformanda.*

Fifth, social structures are also stratified structures. In other words, there is not only inequality based on personal characteristics and individual merits, there is also inequality built into, embedded in, social structures, that sociologists call stratification. The mere fact that you occupy a certain status means that automatically you have more power or less power, that you are dominant or subordinate. The three main sources of stratification are the social statuses of class, race, and gender. For example, the social structures of slavery and segregation are not mere patterned networks of statuses and roles; they are patterned relationships in which members of one group in virtue of the racial status they occupy oppress, exploit, and do violence to members of another group simply because of the color of their skin. Similarly, patriarchy is a relationship of power in which men dominate and subordinate women, not because of any innate superiority but simply because of the social construction of gender. They are structures of inequality; they constitute institutionalized violence.

Thus, in analyzing social structures, it is not enough to ask if they are beneficial, efficient, or functional, but beneficial for whom, efficient for whom, functional for whom? In the creation and construction of social structures, people are not equal. People who have more wealth and power erect the social structures that benefit them, construct them in ways that will redound to their benefit. Sociology calls them sociological, not numerical, majorities, or dominant groups. Thus constructed, social structures function to

the disadvantage of those who have less wealth and power; they may even in fact exploit and oppress those who are disadvantaged; they may do violence to their lives. Sociology calls them sociological, not numerical, minorities, or subordinate groups. This is true especially of social structures stratified on the basis of social class, race, and gender.

Sixth, social structures become reified. Once constructed, social structures have a life of their own. This is one of the basic insights of sociology. Karl Marx called it fetishism of commodities in the economy; Georg Lukacs expanded it to the entire realm of social life and named it reification; Georg Simmel saw it as the creation of massive objective culture. Emile Durkheim delineated social facts as the specific subject matter, *sui generis,* of sociology, and while they are not physical facts, taught that they should be treated as physical facts because they are coercive of our behavior. Max Weber warned that rational social structures would constitute an iron cage. People construct social structures, but once reified people confront them as massive facticities, impinging on and impacting their behaviors, molding and directing their lives, shaping their thought and consciousness.

Social structures therefore are difficult to reform. They may have served their purposes for a particular place and time but they continue to be transmitted as meaningless traditions to later generations; they may have originally served the common good, but because of their unintended consequences, they may have made the situation worse than the original situation; they may be highly stratified, benefiting a few at the expense of the humanity of the many at the bottom of the ladder – all these may have come about because social structures have become reified, "thingified," with a life of their own. This is especially true when social structures are not only reified, but are sacralized, as if they dropped from heaven, as if they have been created by the divinity itself. Social structures then assume an aura of divine immutability.

Social structures, therefore, can become problematic and even pathological. What makes it doubly worse is that social structures are buttressed by ideologies, systems of ideas and beliefs that legitimate, justify, and rationalize the social structures. Stratified social structures are aggravated by ideologies, in the negative sense, that justify the domination and subordination, the prejudice

and discrimination against minorities. Stratified social structures based on class, race, and gender are legitimated by the ideologies of individualism, racism, and sexism. Individualism says that people should pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, that rewards should only be based on personal effort and merit, thus justifying the structured inequality between rich and poor. Racism says that blacks are biologically, intellectually, and morally inferior, therefore it is legitimate to discriminate against them. Sexism holds that the biological differences between men and women indicate different physical, intellectual, and moral capacities, and these form a legitimate basis for unequal treatment. Institutional classism, racism, and sexism make social structures pathological and even lethal for the poor, blacks, and women.

Because of legitimating ideologies, structures of injustice, situations of oppression are accepted both by the oppressors and the oppressed as the natural state of things, as the normal way of doing things. To change and reform pathological institutions, one also needs countervailing ideologies, in the positive meaning of the term, systems of ideas and beliefs that envision a different order of things, that constitute programs of change and action. Karl Mannheim called them "utopias." Thus, to counter stratification based on class, race, and gender, one emphasizes the inherent dignity of all individuals, the human equality of all people, the right of all citizens to participation in society. These ideologies form the underpinning of the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and poor people's movements. But it is an uphill battle against the entrenched interests of reified social structures. It is, moreover, an unending fight to reform social structures that continually tend toward reification, stratification, and sacralization.

Social Sin

The realization that social institutions can be pathological, that some institutions are in fact lethal to subordinated groups, led to the development, in ethics and moral theology, of the concept of social or structural sin. It began with efforts to critique the privatization of the Christian message, to overcome the moralizing impulses of Christian preaching and teaching, and to recover the social dimension of the Gospel, most notably by German political theology and Latin American liberation theology.

At Medellin in 1968, the Latin American bishops, in seeking to understand and analyze the crushing poverty and misery of their continent, spoke of social structures that were so massively unjust, exploitative, and repressive that they had to be called "institutionalized violence." They added that sin was evident in these structures of injustice. They proposed and adopted as part of the Church's pastoral mission "conscientization," the raising of people's consciousness so that the oppressed become aware of the unjust structures that accounted for their marginalization (CELAM 1970: 55-68, 69-82). The analysis therefore was of the social reality of sin, and the proposed moral conversion involved a new way of seeing the social reality and a new way of acting to change the social reality. Since then the social dimension and reality of sin, sinful social structures, social structural sin have been acknowledged in Church documents, on the international and national levels, for example, in *Justice in the World* of the 1971 Synod of Bishops, the social encyclicals of John Paul II, the Instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Christian Freedom and Liberation, and *Economic Justice for All* by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Mark O'Keefe (1990: 3; see also Kerans 1974) notes that "it is precisely sociology which enables theologians to understand how sin can become rooted, embodied, and perpetuated in social institutions. Understanding these social factors is of course the foundation of attempting to overcome them." Social sin is sociological before it is theological. This is the best example of the new constitutive role of the social sciences in the theological task in which social analysis becomes the raw material for theological reflection and ethical evaluation (Boff 1087; see Litonjua 2012).

The social scientific mediation that led to the theological appropriation of social sin can best be illustrated by taking the specific case of segregation. Segregation was, first and foremost, inequality, discrimination, and injustice built into the social institutions of the U.S. South, from marriage and education, to the economy, politics, and religion. Segregation was beyond the control of the individual. But it pervaded and affected the totality of social life so that if you were white, whether you liked it or not, you benefited from it, but if you were black, irrespective of your personal merits, you were its victim.

Underlying and overarching the structures of segregation was the ideology of racism. Racism believed that blacks, distinguished by the color of their skin, were biologically, intellectually, and morally inferior, and therefore it was okay to treat them differently, to discriminate against them, to deny them their civil rights, to prevent them from participation in social and political life.

Racism created false consciousness in both whites and blacks. Whites considered themselves superior, and were blind to the dehumanization and destruction perpetrated on blacks. Blacks felt inferior, were passive and submissive to the evil of segregation; they learned to live within the confines of a segregated society. It was the natural and moral order of society. That is why segregation lasted for so long.

From the institutionalized injustice, ideology, and false consciousness of segregation flowed the collective decisions that maintained and reinforced it. Laws were passed that had the effect of denying the voting rights of blacks; blacks were provided with "separate but equal" education; black defendants were not given due process in the criminal justice system. Individual behavior was facilitated by structural racism when black homes were torched, black women were raped, and black suspects were lynched.

Social science offers this analysis of segregation to theology, offers it as the raw material for its theologizing. Theology, for its part, reflects on the reality of segregation as analyzed by social science, utilizing in the process its proper methodology, criteria, and resources, and arrives at the conclusion that this is a new category of moral sin different from personal sin. The result therefore is not sociology but moral theology.

Gregory Baum was a *peritus,* theological expert and adviser, at Vatican II, who took a two-year leave of absence from his university to study sociology at the New School for Social Research in New York. As a result of his studies, he wrote a theological reading of sociology, in which he, among other things, gave an eminently theological understanding of the social reality of social sin; it remains the best formulation. Baum (1975: 201-02; see also his critique of John Paul II on structural sin, 1994) distinguished four levels in social sin.

The first level of social sin is institutionalized injustice, injustice rooted and embodied in, built and embedded into social structures.

The injustice and violence resulting from this level are not due to the personal intentions and motivations of individuals. As soon as people occupy statuses in the social structures, as long as they participate in such structures, they are either the perpetrators or victims of injustice. The dehumanizing effects of structural injustice are inevitably destructive of persons, lives, relationships, and ultimately of the institution itself. It may take a long time before the negative effects become palpable, longer before they are recognized as such, and longest before the need to reform the institution is acknowledged.

The second level of social sin is ideology, the system of ideas and beliefs that justifies and rationalizes the injustice, the cultural and religious symbols used to legitimate the structural injustice. Because of the ideology, the structural injustice and violence are considered the natural and normal state of things, even the moral order of things. Ideology therefore reinforces the structural injustice on the cognitive and imaginative levels. Ideology makes people ignorant of structural injustice, it blinds them to the dehumanization and destruction caused by institutionalized violence. In fact, ideology makes people, oppressor and oppressed, perpetrators and victims, accept and submit to it.

Religion can become part and parcel of the ideological superstructure. If and when it does, religion becomes the worst ideological weapon. Injustice, discrimination, oppression, and exploitation are justified in the name of God and are carried out ostensibly to serve God's ends.

The third level of social sin is false consciousness, the ignorance and blindness, the delusion and illusion caused by the structural injustice and its legitimating ideology. It is the ideology introjected into consciousness, internalized in the mind and imagination. It is important to note that false consciousness affects both oppressors and oppressed, is present in both the perpetrators and the victims of structural injustice. Because of false consciousness, people go about their institutional lives without being aware of the dehumanizing elements and destructive tendencies built into the social structures they are participating in. In fact, because of false consciousness, people believe that the evil they do is the right thing to do, is good in keeping with the goals and purposes of their collective well-being. Baum (1975: 201-02) points out that "this false

consciousness exists, of course, in varying degrees of intensity, from a total identification with the dominant trends of society, including all of its social effects, to a greater and greater distancing from these trends accompanied by growing awareness of the injustices implicit in them. It is on this level that the wrestling against social sin begins! . . . This is the level where conversion takes place."

The fourth level of social sin is the collective decisions, generated by the false consciousness and ideology, which perpetuate and increase the structural injustice, and which therefore intensify the power of the dehumanizing and destructive trends built into the social institution. These collective decisions, especially those made by people in power and with authority, appear to be based on free choice and deliberation and arrived at for the common good and welfare. They in fact are the rational and logical consequences of the distortions built into the institution, legitimated by ideology, and considered acceptable in consciousness. On this level social sin meets personal sin. The evil done by institutional life can be magnified out of conscious evil intention, greed, and ambition of the individual or group of individuals charged with making decisions for the institution.

Two implications of social sin may be noted. First, there is a dialectical relationship between personal sin and social sin, just as there is a dialectical relationship between the individual and social structures. Just as people create social structures, so social sin usually has its origins in personal sins that rooted and built the injustice into social structures. But once institutionalized, the injustice acquired a life of its own, it followed a logic of its own making, it became social sin. Social sin now affects individuals, blinds them and modifies their consciousness, reinforces inclinations and narrows perspectives, thus facilitating personal sin. Personal sin, in a vicious cycle, aggravates social sin; it affects corporate life, worsens institutional distortions, and magnifies its lethal effects on subordinated groups. This is true of social structures, but more so of social sin: We create, construct social structures, but they soon become our masters. Thus, people are often slain by the objects of their own creation.

Second, there is a difference between personal sin and social sin. Personal sin connotes guilt, but social sin implies

responsibility. This is a pastoral issue of the highest importance. Gregory Baum (1994: 200-01) writes:

> When we try to raise the consciousness of a parish with regard to the subjugation of the Native peoples or the exploitative economic structures that impoverish the Third World, people often get the impression that they are being blamed or accused of sin. They resist the Church's social teaching because they refuse to be made to feel guilty. They know they did not participate in the imperialist project to subjugate the Native peoples nor in the extension of the capitalist economy to the nations of the Third World. In this situation it is important to explain that we assume the burden of collective transgressions by spiritual solidarity. In my experience people are quite ready to mourn that we belong to a society that has damaged and is still damaging significant sectors of the population at home and abroad. Mourning of this kind is a mental preparation for spiritual renewal and political action. The proper spiritual response to social sin then is mourning and a keener sense of personal responsibility.

Sinful Church

The question that now begs to be asked is: Can the concept and reality of social sin be applied to the Church of Christ as it subsists in space and time, to a particular institutional church for a specific injustice in its history? Can it apply, for example, to the Catholic Church for an injustice that has been built into its social structures, for an ideology legitimating and justifying such an injustice, for creating false consciousness about such an injustice and ideology, and for collective decisions flowing from them that have been destructive of persons and lives? Can the Church as the pilgrim People of God be not only a Church of sinners but also a sinful Church (see Rahner 1969a: 253-69; 1969b: 270-94)? Is the Church *ecclesia semper reformanda* not only because of the sins of its leaders and members, but also because of social sin, because it is a sinful church?

A couple of preliminary considerations from the documents of Vatican II (Abbott 1966) need to be laid down first. One, *Lumen Gentium* (No. 8) points out that "the unique Church of Christ . . . subsists in the Catholic Church," and that "many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside of her visible structure." Similarly, according to *Dignitatis Humanae* (No. 1), the "one true religion subsists in the catholic and apostolic church," while *Unitatis Redintegratio* (No. 3) repeats that "some, even very many, of the most significant elements or endowments which

together go to build up and give life to the Church herself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church." There is not therefore a simple identification between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is not yet the Church of Christ in its fullness; it is a pilgrim Church on its way to becoming the eschatological fullness of the Church of Christ.

Two, like any human institution, albeit also a divine institution, the social institution of the Catholic Church is a mixture of good and bad. It can be the embodiment of the good, it can become also the embodiment of the bad. As a religious institution, it experiences the dilemmas of religious institutionalization. As a social institution, it can be subject to the pathologies afflicting all institutions. That is why Vatican II declares that "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men on earth. Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies in conduct, in Church discipline, or even in the formulation of doctrine (which must be carefully distinguished from the deposit itself of faith), these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment" (*Unitatis Redintegratio,* No. 6).

From this it follows in the abstract that the Catholic Church can be responsible for social sin, that the institutional church can be not only a church of sinners but a sinful church. Whether or not it has been so, and in what specific circumstances can only be answered through a systematic scrutiny into its long and variegated history. This is beyond the purview of this paper. The structural relationship of the Catholic Church toward Jews, however, is illustrative of social sin, a history that has been the subject of recent studies (Boys 2000; Carroll 2001; Kertzer 2001, 1997).

It all began as polemical anti-Judaism. Against the backdrop of the oppressive colonial rule of Rome and especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, the question was: Who is the true Israel? There were competing groups in Judaism: the priestly class of Sadducees whose cultic focus had been undercut with the destruction of the temple, the Zealots now defeated by the might of Rome, the Essenes who had fled to the desert, the Pharisees whose movement would evolve into rabbinic Judaism, and the Jesus movement. The conflict became primarily between the two latter

groups; it was a sectarian conflict among Jews. It was however a conflict that became sharper over time. In the passion narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke wherein the scene of Jesus before Pilate is depicted, those who rail against Jesus are referred to as "people" or "crowd;" in John, however, they are explicitly called "Jews," i.e., Jews who opposed Christ. This polemical anti-Judaism on the part of the Jesus movement became part and parcel of its efforts to forge a new identity, different and separate from the other Judaisms. Thus, again in the passion narratives, the gospels put more blame on the Jewish leadership and its followers than on Pilate and the Romans for the death and crucifixion of Jesus. The new identity, most importantly, that was being forged is centered on the person of Jesus. Thus, religious anti-Judaism, not racial anti-semitism, *contra* Rosemary Radford Ruether (1974), became "the left hand of Christology."

Constantine marks a turning point in the sectarian conflict. Christians now had the power of empire on their side, especially since Constantine sought to consolidate his rule on the basis of the unity of faith and church. The cross became the ideological weapon that accused the Jews of deicide, and the sword was the instrument of policy. Unlike the Arians, Manichaeans, Donatists, and Docetists, however, who disappeared from history, the Jews were not exterminated. The rationale was given by Augustine: Let them survive, but do not let them thrive! The Jews were not to be slain, because they are witnesses of the prophecies which were made beforehand concerning Christ. Jacob Neusner (1987: 146) admits that "Judaism endured in the West for two reasons. First, Christianity permitted it to endure, and, second, Israel, the Jewish people, wanted it to. The fate of paganism in the fourth century shows the importance of the first of the two factors."

Anti-Judaism is transmogrified into anti-semitism by the Spanish Inquisition. James Carroll (2001: 381) writes that "the shift from a religious definition of Jewishness to a racial one is perhaps the most decisive in this long narrative, and its fault lines, reaching far into the consciousness of Western civilization, will define the moral geography of the modern age." The 1547 statute of Toledo forbade the appointment to the city's cathedral of any Christian descended from Jews. The statute based on a new idea of blood purity – *limpieza de sangre* – introduced the biological divide of

racial superiority and racial inferiority into the central institutions of Christianity. Thus, Carroll (2001: 381) considers it "a watershed not just in Church history but in human history." The idea of conversion to escape pariah status within Christian culture lost its rationale for Jews. For its part, blood-purity regulations spelled the end of the Church's missionary efforts toward the Jews.

With the 1555 election of Paul IV, the mind of the Inquisition arrived fully in the papacy. He ratified the blood purity statute of Toledo for the universal Church, so that racial anti-semitism, not only religious anti-Judaism, *pace* Rosemary Radford Ruether (1974), becomes "the left hand of Christology," and indeed of theology as a whole. He issued the bull, *Cum Nimis Absurdum,* whose unseemly language toward Jews will only be superseded by Hitler's, that mandated Jews in Christendom to live henceforth in the ghetto. James Carroll (2001: 376) mentions that Cardinal Edward Cassidy, head of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, said in an address to a group of Jewish leaders in Washington, D.C., in May 1998, that "the ghetto, which came into being with a papal bull, became in Nazi Germany the antechamber of extermination." There was, of course, no straight line of causation from Christian antagonism toward Jews to the last convulsive act of Europe's hatred of Jews because there was nothing deterministic nor predictable about the particular evil of Hitler. Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon, was not even the inevitable result of Christian anti-semitism. Nonetheless, James Carroll's (2001: 476) indictment rings true:

> However modern Nazism was, it planted its roots in the soil of age-old Church attitudes and a nearly unbroken chain of Church-sponsored acts of Jew hatred. However pagan Nazism was, it drew its sustenance from groundwater poisoned by the Church's most solemnly held ideology – its theology. . . . Nazism, by tapping into deep, ever-fresh reservoir of Christian hatred of Jews, was able to make an accomplice of the Catholic Church in history's worst crime, even though, by then, it was the last thing the Church consciously wanted to be.

If this is not social sin, then there is no social sin. All the elements are there: anti-Judaism embedded into the foundational documents of Christianity that will be transformed into anti-semitism as an organizing principle of Christian institutional life and identity; the theology of the cross wielded as the ideology of deicide against Jews; false consciousness that permeated the Church for so long,

and blinded it to the violence it perpetrated against the Jewish people; group decisions by the leadership of the Church that maintained and reinforced the anti-semitism, the ideology, the false consciousness, and the violence. Sociologically and theologically, anti-semitism is a social sin that, until Vatican II, the entire Church was responsible for. The focus is usually on Pius XII and his "silence" on the Holocaust. But it would be fairer to put him in his proper historical and structural context, which is the long history of institutional anti-semitism of the Catholic Church.

Anti-semitism in the Catholic Church has analogous similarities to racism in the segregationist South. Racism was woven into the fabric of life and society of the South before the 1960s, was embodied in laws, conditioned unconsciously the minds and the attitudes of both racists and their victims. Anti-semitism was built into the ideological and institutional structures of Catholicism, its laws, its Christology, its Holy Week liturgy, and unconsciously influenced the consciousness of generations of Catholics, leaders and followers alike. Institutional racism was outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but it lingers on in more insidious, because hidden and subtle, forms. Institutional anti-semitism was declared wrong by the Catholic Church during the Second Vatican Council, but it also lingers on in subtle, unconscious, insidious, and dangerous currents. It is not only a case of individuals, but a matter of social structures. It is not only the guilt of individual sin, but the challenge of social sin.

The continuing problem is that the Catholic Church has not yet confronted the reality of social sin in its institutional life. The long-awaited 1998 statement, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," and the 2000 statement, "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," are both self-serving and self-exonerating. Some are praised for heroism, many are credited for virtuous acts, others are faulted, but the Church as a whole is unblemished. But who were these few members who were guilty and responsible? They were popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests – some of them declared Fathers or Doctors of the Church, some raised to the canonical status of sainthood – who occupied the teaching, sanctifying, and governing offices of the institutional Church. The impression given is that they were an insignificant few who performed insignificant roles. This is intellectual dishonesty,

and it is symptomatic of the "structures of deceit" of the papacy that may well be also social sin (Wills 2000).

Vatican II made a revolutionary move in repudiating anti-semitism. But the job remains unfinished. The main task, I think, is theological. The church has yet to face, in David Tracy's (1991: 98) phrase, "the revolting underside of Christology in the history of Christian antisemitism." Ideas have consequences, theology has real-world repercussions. Part of that task is confronting the theological idea and reality of social sin in the church. The task remains unfulfilled until and unless we accept that the institutional church, the pilgrim church on earth, is not only a church of sinners, but has been, and can be, and is a sinful church. In a letter, startling in its ferocity, addressed to Cardinal Ratzinger to protest his rejection of Johann Baptist Metz to an appointment at the University of Munich in 1979, Karl Rahner (see Allen 2000: 125-26) is unambiguous: "For many years as theology professor, I have taught that the church is a sinful church and in many instances it errs in its teaching and decisions. That is true yesterday, today and tomorrow."

Conclusion

This paper was prompted by questions regarding the global pedophilia scandal that swept the Catholic Church in many countries and that continues to devastate it, especially in "Catholic" Ireland (see e.g. Higgins and Kavanagh 2010; Rigert 2008; Cozzens 2002; Kenny 2000): How could this have happened? What were the bishops thinking? Why is the Vatican not responding?

It is important to distinguish two aspects of the crisis. First, there is the case of priests raping, sexually assaulting, abusing and exploiting young people. Second, there is the complicity of bishops in covering up the crimes of their priests, in transferring them from parish to parish, thus spreading the disease and increasing the number of victims. The most comprehensive account of the crisis to date is Michael D'Antonio's (2013) *Mortal Sins,* which focuses on the horrible abuse of children perpetrated by ordained ministers, and the efforts of church officials "to resist grand jury subpoenas, to suppress the names of offending clerics, to deny, to obfuscate, to explain away;" in the words of former Oklahoma Governor Frank

Keating who resigned as head of a national review board, created by the American bishops, to investigate the abuse crisis, "that is the model of a criminal organization, not my church." D'Antonio begins his book with the account of the fall of papal Rome to Italian national troops in 1878; what he recounts in his book is the second fall of papal Rome in its ultimately futile intransigence in the sexual abuse crisis. The first ended the church of its temporal power; the second deprived it of its moral authority.

The paper does not address directly the case of pedophile priests (see O'Malley 2002; Lofton 2012; especially Robinson 2008: 8-23). Many reasons have been given why people turn out to be pedophile, why in this particular case priests are or became pedophile. Some point to clericalism, the culture which leads members of the clergy to think that they are on a pedestal, that they are special and therefore can be imperious, that they have prerogatives not given to other men, and that therefore they are allowed to engage in activities that ordinary men are not entitled to (see Wilson 2008). Others mention the narrow-minded, exclusively male, and repressive climate in which they were educated, that emphasized the avoidance of contact with women, the enormity of sexual sins, the importance of sexual purity, and that therefore did not allow them to have a normal psycho-sexual development (see Kennedy 2001). Other less plausible reasons are obligatory and enforced celibacy and the possible misogyny that accompanies it, and a distorted and perverted homosexuality, not homosexuality in itself, since many of the victims were young men, and therefore it was not a case of pedophilia – sex with prepubescent children, but of ephebophilia – sex with postpubescent youth.

The complicity of bishops is the more serious aspect. Bishops, it is safely assumed, are chosen because of their intelligence and probity, their advanced theological and moral education, their sensitivity to moral and social issues, their compassion for the less fortunate and most vulnerable members of society. They are the shepherds of their flocks in their dioceses. Like Jesus, a bishop is supposed to be the good shepherd: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Instead, a complicit bishop is a hired hand: "The hired hand, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired

hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep" (John 10: 12-13). A complicit bishop betrays the most vulnerable members of his flock and, worse than the pedophile, spreads the rot around.

The complicity of bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, including the silence and insensitivity of John Paul II, who was on a fast- track for beatification (Allen 2011), is a great institutional dereliction of religious duty; it reveals a serious institutional pathology; it is symptomatic of a governance style associated with absolute monarchy, which is still the case with the Catholic Church. In fact, the "pathologization" of Catholic religious institutions is both facilitated and aggravated by a baroque social world, social imaginary, and mind-set that continue to inform its ecclesiastical structures, its forms of governance, its laws and authority. A baroque social imaginary is autocratic, hierarchical, and patriarchal, is structurally unequal between cleric and lay, and emphasizes slavish conformity to what it conceives to be divine and natural law. In contrast modern social imaginaries focus on individual human rights and dignity, on equality between classes, races, and genders, and on participation in decision-making processes (Charles Taylor 2004; Beal 2011: 139-45). The modern political imaginary is captured by Reinhold Niebuhr's famous adage: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

The Catholic Church, for a long time now, suffers from what John W. O'Malley (2000) called "the papalization of Catholicism," the concentration of absolute power in the papacy such that the pope has become the defining element of Catholicism. The suffering has been recently expressed by Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny (2011) as he harshly attacked "the dysfunction, disconnection, elitism . . . the narcissism that dominate the culture of the Vatican to this day. The rape and torture of children were downplayed or 'managed' to uphold instead, the primacy of the institution, its power, standing and 'reputation.'" The Prime Minister pointed out: "Cardinal Josef Ratzinger said: 'Standards of conduct appropriate to civil society or the workings of a democracy cannot be purely and simply applied to the Church.'. . . I am making it absolutely clear, that when it comes to the protection of the children of this State, the standards of conduct which the

Church deems appropriate to itself, cannot and will not, be applied to the workings of democracy and civil society in this republic." What is more startling was the widespread praise he received, even from some members of the Irish hierarchy, a remarkable turnaround for a church and a country that have always been obsequious to Rome (Kelly 2011).

Vatican II balanced Vatican I's teaching on the primacy and infallibility of the pope by defining the collegiality of the church, the joint responsibility of the papacy and the episcopal college in the governance of the church. However, under John Paul II and his Cardinal-Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger, who became Benedict XVI, collegiality became a dead doctrine. Ratzinger as a theologian at Vatican II championed collegiality, but as cardinal-watchdog of doctrine became its chief opponent. Marco Politi (see Berry 2011: 281), correspondent for *La Repubblica*, quotes Ratzinger, in November 2004, a few months before being elected pope, as saying: "It is increasingly apparent that a worldwide Church, particularly in this present situation, cannot be governed by an absolute monarch . . . in time a means will be found to create realistically a profound collaboration between the bishops and the Pope, because only in this way will we be able to respond to the challenges of this world." Politi adds: "Benedict XVI has done nothing to realize this principle." But in the global pedophilia crisis he was faced with the worst scandal and challenge of the Catholic Church in centuries, which for all practical purpose has put him on trial (Israely and Chua-Eoan 2010).

Geoffrey Robinson (2008: 265-88), retired auxiliary bishop of Sydney, who coordinated the response of the Catholic Church in Australia to revelations of clergy sex abuse, has dared propose a governance of the Church on three levels of government – the Peter-figure, the bishops, and the mind of the whole Church – in which the entire People of God participate. The Church cannot continue to be the last absolute monarchy on planet earth for the sake of its theology and ministry, for the cause of its witness and mission. The institutionalization of the Catholic religion as an absolute monarchy has become counter-productive, because counter-evangelical and counter-sacramental. This remains true with the resignation of Benedict XVI and the ascension to the papacy of Pope Francis I.

It will be remembered that Lord Acton's famous maxim – "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." – was uttered in connection with the debate on papal infallibility at Vatican I. Today, there remains but one supreme, absolute, and nondemocratic sovereign living in palatial splendor, royally robed, surrounded by courtiers and obsequious ministers, and guarded by soldiers armed with halberds and swords, for whom *raison d'eglise* is claimed. John Coleman (1989) prefaces his article on *raison d'eglise* with a quotation from Gunther Lewy who wrote *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany:* "In any crucial situation the behavior of the Catholic church may be more reliably predicted by reference to its interests as a political organization than by reference to its timeless dogmas."

Coleman (1989: 252) points out that *raison d'etat* refers to "the intractable self-interest of states in conducting a foreign policy, the action consequences of protecting state sovereignty, and the bottom-line imperatives of national governments. Less attention is paid to the concept of *raison d'eglise,* the organizational imperatives of a church, its bottom-line, non-negotiable interests and institutional purposes." And yet, if there had been abuses, tragedies, war, and bloodshed in the claims of *raison d'etat,* there can be worse consequences in the pretensions of *raison d'eglise,* given the tendency that even purely organizational structures of the Catholic Church are sacralized and vested with creeping infallibility. It is not surprising that the claims of *raison d'eglise* are asserted vis-a-vis the institutional imperatives of the Church, such as, the unity, often understood as the uniformity, of the Catholic Church's faith and life; the religious freedom, however misappropriated and overreached, of the Church to teach and preach in the public square; the Catholic hierarchy's monopoly of teaching and discipline within the Church, overreliance on which has become pathological in the light of the unimplemented doctrine on collegiality.

But to claim the prerogatives of *raison d'eglise* – the reputation of the institution, the good name of priests, the danger of scandalizing the laity, the unquestioned authority of the bishop – in matters that are profoundly moral and pastoral in nature, of which the sexual abuse of minors is only the most egregious example, is simply the perversion of absolute monarchical power. If Louis XIV, the Sun

King of France, allegedly claimed *L'Etat, c'est moi,* the pope seated on his papal throne and the bishop perched on his episcopal throne would assert *L'Eglise, c'est moi.* How else could it be that Archbishop Timothy Dolan of Milwaukee, now Cardinal of New York, paid $20,000 to each of his pedophile priests and lied about it (Goodstein, 2012), while he played a shell game, shifting $55.6 million on the church's balance sheets to a secure trust for perpetual care at cemeteries, so that he would not compensate the victims of his clergy's sexual abuse (Berry 2012). To pit the dead against the living in a quest for money, to what depths of institutional pathology has the Catholic Church descended? The absolute monarchy of the Church today, on the universal as well as the diocesan levels, has become pathological, dysfunctional, and counter-productive.

There is no easy way to end, except with the harsh and hopeful words of Dorothy Day (Jordan 2013: 14): "As a convert, I never expected much of the bishops. In all history, popes and bishops and father abbots seem to have been blind and power-loving and greedy. I never expected leadership from them. It is the saints who keep appearing throughout history to keep things going. . . . No matter how corrupt the church may become, it carries with it the seeds of its own regeneration. To read the lives of the saints has always helped me."

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