DuBourg’s Defense of St. Mary’s College: Apologetics and the Creation of a Catholic Identity in the Early American Republic

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When the Baltimore Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church issued a pastoral letter critical of St. Mary’s College in 1811 it provided an opportunity for Louis DuBourg, the college’s president, to respond with an apologetic defense of the college and of Catholicism more generally. In doing so he synthesized several strands of Catholic apologetics, including the via notarum, the utilitarianism that came to dominate French Catholic apologetics in the eighteenth century, the emphasis upon beauty and emotion that characterized Chateaubriand’s Genius of Christianity, and the earlier work of Bishop Bossuet critical of the doctrinal instability of protestantism. Aimed at a popular audience, DuBourg’s apologetics created an identity for the American Catholic Church that emphasized its place within the largest part of worldwide Christianity, its role as educator of the best minds of Western civilization, and the beauty of its worship.

I. INTRODUCTION

When Louis Dubourg, president of St. Mary’s College in Baltimore, gave a brief commencement address at the school in 1806, he could not have anticipated the negative response. The address traced the history of Christian higher education to the University of Paris, giving Paris credit for the suppression of superstition.1 An anonymous reader took offense at what he saw as a misinterpretation of history, since it was the Protestant Reformation that had begun the assault upon superstition. He expressed his view in a letter to a newspaper. More letters by him as well as others critical of St. Mary’s followed. The only defense came in two short submissions by DuBourg, who evidently thought that the criticisms, coming

The author would like to thank the anonymous readers for their careful review of this article and for their suggestions.

1 “Address of the President of St. Mary’s College to Gentlemen who took degrees and numerous audience,” Companion and Weekly Miscellany, August 23, 1806, 337–339.

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65
as they did from anonymous private citizens, were not worthy of much in the way of rebuttal.²

Five years later the Presbytery of Baltimore criticized the school in a pastoral letter,³ and this time DuBourg enthusiastically used the occasion to mount an extensive defense of St. Mary’s in the public square.⁴ DuBourg drew upon several sources of Catholic apologetics to produce both a defense of Catholicism and a comprehensive critique of American Presbyterianism. His *Vindication* combined arguments from the *via notarum*, a school of apologetics developed in the sixteenth century, with the newer utilitarian defense of Christianity that became popular in France in the eighteenth century. It also showed the influence of the Viscount of Chateaubriand’s recently published *Genius of Christianity* and Bishop Jacques Bossuet’s *The History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*, a classic French work.⁵

Catholic-protestant discourse in America by the early nineteenth century had a long history, although nearly all of it came from the Protestant side. Throughout the colonial period there was much written about the Catholic Church, most of it critical in nature. The errors of the Roman religion and its attendant dangers, both spiritual and civil, were subjects of continuing interest as evidenced by learned lectures like the Dudleian at Harvard, weighty tomes like John Adam’s *Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law*, popular sermons, and newspaper and magazine articles. This writing was part of a colonial culture that was imported from Britain, a culture that included legal penalties in almost all the colonies against the practice of Catholicism as well as popular suspicion of a church that was established in England’s sometime enemies, France and Spain.⁶ The small Catholic

²Strictures on the establishment of colleges, particularly that of St. Mary, in the precincts of Baltimore, as formerly published in *The Evening Post and Telegraph* (Baltimore, Md.: n.p., 1806). Hereafter *Strictures*. This work comprised 73 printed pages, almost all of them critical in nature. The *Strictures* also reprinted a brief history of St. Mary’s, which had appeared in the press as “An account of the foundation and progress of the College of St. Mary’s,” *Companion and Weekly Miscellany*, August 16, 1806, 329–332.

³A Pastoral Letter from the Ministers, or Bishops, and Ruling Elders of the Presbytery of Baltimore to all under their charges; on various duties; but, especially, on the religious education of their Youth, George Town, October, 26, 1810 (Baltimore, Md.: Warner and Hanna, 1811). Hereafter *Pastoral*.

⁴Louis DuBourg, *St. Mary’s Seminary and Catholics at large Vindicated, against the Pastoral Letter of the Ministers, Bishops, etc. of the Presbytery of Baltimore, published in September, 1811* (Baltimore, Md.: Bernard Dornin, October, 1811). Hereafter *Vindication*.


population in the colonies did not have the means to refute this criticism, save for an occasional writing from French Canada, sermons, or works of Catholic apologetics from England. This climate of anti-Catholicism abated somewhat during the era of the revolutionary war. In light of the alliance with Catholic France, as well as the appeal for support from French Catholic Canada, the leaders of the revolution consciously downplayed traditional anti-Catholicism, as famously evidenced by George Washington’s prohibition of the celebration of Pope’s Day, the American equivalent of Guy Fawkes Day. Even Presbyterian antagonism towards the Catholic Church waned with a sense that all religious conflict could be mitigated in the new nation.

In addition to the expedience-based acceptance of Catholicism, the times also witnessed a principled debate on the matter of religious liberty. Proponents of religious liberty like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison shepherded Virginia to the adoption of a statute on religious freedom in a contest in which they were opposed by Anglicans and supported initially by Baptists and then Presbyterians. Later, the same principle became enshrined in the new Federal Constitution. This freedom included Catholics, some of whom accepted the prevailing religious pluralism in principle as well as a practical accommodation from which they benefitted.

Principled adherence to religious liberty and its attendant pluralism did not mean, however, that religious disputation ceased. Protestants debated religious matters amongst themselves, and also with Catholics. A critique of Catholicism appeared soon after the conclusion of the revolutionary war, penned by former Catholic and current Anglican Charles Wharton, who argued against Catholic positions on matters long in dispute between Catholics and Protestants like infallibility and transubstantiation. This
provoked a response by John Carroll in 1784 as head of the Catholic Church in America. In the early 1790s John Thayer, a convert to Catholicism and something of an international celebrity due to the wide circulation of his autobiography recounting his conversion, engaged in a religious disputation in newspapers with some of the Protestant clergy of New England. A heightened Catholic sensitivity to criticism and the church’s standing as one of the several strains of Christianity given equal footing by the Constitution provoked responses to anything deemed offensive. A passing remark critical of indulgences by a Quaker in the Philadelphia press in 1792 provoked a defense by Catholic layman Matthew Carey and Ferdinand Farmer, an active ex-Jesuit. A newspaper piece in the National Gazette in 1789, emphasizing the importance of Protestantism in the development of American society and hinting that Protestant clergy should be supported by the state, provoked a criticism by John Carroll. He forcefully argued against anything that suggested a religious establishment, and in the process deconstructed the notion that Protestantism had a special place in the formation of American culture.

DuBourg’s apologetic may be viewed accordingly within the context of Catholic determination to respond to criticism, but his apologetic approach differed from the arguments over doctrine that characterized much of the work of Carroll and Thayer in the works noted above. He instead focused upon the amplitude of the Catholic Church; the efficacy of Catholic education in advancing knowledge and civilization; the beauty of the church’s liturgy; and the support that the church provided to governments,

12John Thayer, The Catholic Controversy (Dublin: R. Coyne, 1809; orig. 1793). Thayer was one of the more controversial figures in the church in the early republic. He was converted while visiting Europe and educated at St. Sulpice. Much was expected of him upon his return to the United States. His polemical style made his an unwanted presence in New England. His discomfort with slavery made Baltimore an ungenial location for his work, and when he went to Kentucky he could not get along with his fellow clerics. His commitment to celibacy was purportedly less than what was expected in the American church, and he left for Ireland. He was instrumental in the founding of the Ursuline convent near Boston, which was subsequently burned down by hostile Protestants.
including republican ones. DuBourg probably agreed with Chateaubriand, who observed that traditional forms of religious discourse centered on theological disputes over doctrine could not attract a contemporary audience. Only appeals to the religious imagination could do that. His vigorous style of writing in the *Vindication* had a popular character throughout. His arguments about the amplitude of the church and its beauty could be easily understood. So too could his stress upon the divided nature of protestantism and its doctrinal and psychological instability. In his writing DuBourg gave definition to the Catholic Church in the competitive religious landscape of the early republic.

II. RELIGION, COMPETITION, AND COLLEGES

The protestant attack upon St. Mary’s may be understood in the context of the history of Christian education up through the early nineteenth century. Churches founded many schools in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with competition among the schools intense and failure high. The Reformed religions—Congregationalists in New England and Presbyterians in the other colonies—founded schools that would produce a learned clergy as well as doctors and educated laymen for civil administration. The Reformed religions were effective in maintaining a strong position in higher education against the efforts of others, especially of Anglicans, to gain influence. Presbyterians were also concerned about inroads into education by Unitarians. They countered the appointment of a Unitarian as head of Transylvania College in Kentucky by founding the Kentucky Academy and urged their members to use this school exclusively. In the period after the American Revolution when the founding of denominational colleges flourished, the Presbyterians led the way with eleven out of a total twenty-three.

After 1800 Reformed education experienced some setbacks. In 1805 Harvard appointed a Unitarian to the Hollis chair of divinity. The Hollis appointment was a shock for the orthodox and combined with the election soon after of a Unitarian president to the college, represented a major loss for Reformed education. Princeton, the most prominent of the Presbyterian

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colleges, also faced problems in the new century. A fire did severe damage to the school in 1803 and then a student rebellion in 1807 led to the dismissal of the entire student body. In response to the loss of Harvard, the Reformed clergy reacted with a burst of activity, including a renewed emphasis upon education with the founding of Andover Theological Seminary in 1806, Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812, and Amherst College in 1821. It was in this context that the Presbytery of Baltimore addressed the issue of Christian education with a Pastoral that included criticism of St Mary’s.

Louis Dubourg personally founded St. Mary’s College in Baltimore in 1800 as an adjunct to St. Mary’s Seminary, which the Gentlemen of St. Sulpice established in 1791. The seminary attracted few students for the priesthood in its early years, which left the Sulpicians who had come to America to staff it with little to do. Several went as missionaries to the West of the United States pending hoped for growth. Dubourg, who remained in Baltimore, founded a school that would make good use of the Sulpicians and, by charging tuition, fund seminary students should these present themselves. Dubourg, educated at St. Sulpice in Paris, taught in France prior to his exile to the United States. He had also served briefly as President of Georgetown Academy, and had tried to establish a school in Cuba, a project that failed. He then proposed to start a school in Baltimore, which met resistance from James Emery, the head of the Sulpicians in France, who objected that the education of laypersons was something beyond the Sulpicians’ mission, which was exclusively seminary education. Also, Bishop Carroll was concerned that a second Catholic college would compete with Georgetown, which was not doing well at the time. He nevertheless agreed to a proposal by Dubourg to found a school in Baltimore that would educate only foreigners who were expected to come mostly from the Caribbean islands. French authorities in the Caribbean were wary of the potential for American inroads in the area, and then a decision by the Spanish Crown to prohibit the education of Cuban students in Baltimore caused a crisis in the early St. Mary’s. This led Dubourg to take a fateful step. In 1803 he allowed American students, including protestants, to attend the college. There was some additional resistance in Europe to this move, but the action would lead to growth for the school, which came to have more protestant than Catholic students.

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21 Dixon Ryan Fox, “The Protestant Counter-Reformation in America,” *New York History* XVI, no. 1 (January 1935): 19–33. For Fox the Reformed response to Unitarianism was an American Counter-Reformation. This is an older work but one that is effective in demonstrating the profound effect that the loss of Harvard had upon the Reformed churches.

Allowing protestants to attend St. Mary’s had precedent. Bishop Carroll had founded Georgetown as a school that was open to both Catholics and protestants. Bishop Carroll had founded Georgetown as a school that was open to both Catholics and protestants. 

Carroll was an ex-Jesuit with experience both as student and teacher in Jesuit schools on the continent. The Jesuits had allowed protestants to attend their schools from the very beginning of their educational work in Europe in the mid sixteenth century, with the hope that this might contribute to the students’ and their parents’ conversion, a policy that had favorable results. Until The College of the Holy Cross in 1843 excluded protestants, all Catholic secondary schools and colleges in the United States accepted them, just as contemporary protestant colleges accepted students of all Christian religions, including in some cases Catholics. Nor was it just schools for men that accepted protestant students. Catholic schools for women in the United States followed the lead of convents for women on the continent, which had long attracted students from English protestant families. When Thomas Jefferson placed his daughters in a convent school, attracted by the quality of the education, while he was stationed in Paris, he was following a well-worn tradition. Many fellow students of Jefferson’s daughters were from English noble families, with Jefferson claiming that half of the students there were protestants. Jefferson’s decision had risks. Jefferson’s daughter Martha wanted to convert and become a nun, a course of action that Jefferson successfully discouraged. Many Americans would follow Jefferson’s example and enrolled their daughters in convent schools. The Ursuline

1766–1833, vol. 1, Schoolman, 1766–1818 (Chicago: Loyola University, 1986), 103–146; “An Account of the Foundation,” 329–332; Dorothy MacKay Quinn, “Dangers of Subversion in an American Education: A French View,” Catholic Historical Review 39, no. 2 (April 1953): 28–35. Emery reported that the Pope and the Cardinal Head of Propaganda Fide, to whom the Pope turned the matter over, did not like the idea of accepting protestants. The Cardinal’s opposition was not firmly held since when the Sulpician told him that Bishop Carroll had no objection he relented. Melville, DuBourg, 100.


25Edmund G. Goebel, A Study of Catholic Secondary Education during the Colonial Period up to the First Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1852 (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1937), 99; for Catholics, including members of the Carroll family, at Harvard, see Morrison, Three Centuries, 198; Gleason, John Carroll, 600; Curran, John Carroll, 370; Beneke, Beyond Toleration, 96–103.

convent near Boston, for example, attracted the daughters of the Unitarian elite, who composed the vast majority of the students.

St. Mary’s exempted protestants from engaging in the school’s religious activities, just as had the Jesuits in their schools, to make attendance attractive for protestant parents. Dubourg was adamant that St. Mary’s did not seek converts, claiming that there was not a single example of such from the school. It was not easy for American protestants to believe that a French Catholic priest working in a missionary country would forego attempts to convert young people in his charge. They had a lasting impression from a brush with Catholic education during the colonial period. Native Americans allied with the French made a practice of capturing protestant children and taking them to Canada. There French Canadians ransomed them and attempted to convert them to Catholicism, sometimes meeting with success, a practice in which the French clergy in Canada participated.27 Still, DuBourg does appear to have told the truth about eschewing attempts at conversion, since such actions would have likely led to a backlash among protestant parents. Moreover, in the long run, the benefits of operating a successful school would help to establish a foundation for the church in the United States.

III. NEWSPAPER CONTROVERSY

The success of St. Mary’s, including its ability to attract protestant students, became widely known. The state brought notice to the school when it granted it a university charter in 1804. Then in 1806 came Dubourg’s commencement address, extoling the achievements of its graduates. DuBourg’s talk placed St. Mary’s in the long tradition of Catholic higher education, extending back to the University of Paris, which DuBourg believed was founded in the era of Charlemagne, a traditional misdating. The blazing light of Paris, for DuBourg, began the process of driving back the darkness of the forces of barbarism and superstition, to the benefit of true religion. Other places started universities of their own. Education improved the quality of doctors and magistrates and led to a general enhancement in living conditions. It also had political

implications and helped to undermine the power of the nobility. In an irenic spirit, DuBourg praised the protestant colleges in America as heirs to this tradition, spreading useful knowledge throughout the country.

For the initial critic of St Mary’s this was a provocative view of history. It was protestantism, not a medieval Catholic university, that had begun to suppress superstition, and that had brought light from darkness. The University of Paris was an example not of enlightenment but of superstition and inane scholasticism, just as Catholicism itself was proof of the continuing influence of superstition. Several others joined in the attack. The criticisms were far ranging and included specific criticisms against the school, as well as charges of broader cultural, political, social and religious natures. The articles criticized the school for having a president who had appointed himself and who had no scholarly reputation; for the teachers, especially in mathematics, who were of poor quality; and for the youth of the students who were below the age that prevailed in other colleges. From a cultural perspective, they criticized St. Mary’s for the use of the French language, and for its foreign and exotic character, with teachers who came from France. From a social perspective they charged the school with being aristocratic, with charging high tuition, and with cultivating a snobbish appeal. Its classes in fencing and dancing came in for criticism, as did the alleged overall superficial character of the education that it provided. Politically, the school fostered monarchy and aristocracy and accordingly was completely out of tune with the democratic nature of the American political system. The specifically religious criticism of the school charged it with scholasticism and attendant superstition, that it was inimical to protestant light, learning and science, that it tried to convert its protestant students, and that it used the catechism of the Abbe Claude Fleury to indoctrinate them in Catholic beliefs.

Many of these charges were ironically against characteristics of the school that helped to explain its popularity for many. The drive for refinement and gentility in American life was at full force in the early republic. Refinement derived from the aristocratic culture of the Renaissance Catholic courts of Italy, France, and Spain which then passed to England and from there to the American colonies. Jesuits and other religious orders maintained schools in Europe that transmitted this culture to their students, a culture that in the guise of refinement crossed the Atlantic and was widely popular. George Washington, for example, trained himself in social graces with a book that was an English translation of the etiquette taught at the College of La Fleche, one of the most prominent of the French Jesuit schools.28

Although most Jesuit schools were free, some schools for the aristocracy and wealthy commoners were residential in nature, charged very high fees, and included classes in fencing, dancing, and horsemanship. Dubourg followed this model at St. Mary’s, which, with its exclusiveness based upon high tuition and its classes in dancing and fencing, provided precisely what many Americans wanted. The school’s French connection at a time when French cultural prestige was still enormously high in the new republic was also an attraction for many. Some of the criticism of St. Mary’s may have been part of the rear guard action that some Christians were mounting against refinement, an opposition that was already a lost cause among the middle and upper classes. Other criticisms that charged the church with superstitious scholasticism, with antagonism to protestant light, and with opposition to religious and civil liberty went back to the Reformation itself or to the Whig tradition that was a powerful current in Anglo-American political culture.

DuBourg submitted two short pieces to the newspaper debate in which he responded to some of the charges. St. Mary’s simply could not afford to educate both those who could pay and those who could not, but it did educate some students for free. The school did not require attendance at any religious function by non-Catholic students, and although the staff was currently all Catholic, this could change as there was no policy against hiring non Catholics. The Frenchmen who staffed the school were guests in the country and entitled to hospitality in their new land. Foreigners could bring good things to the country other than sedition. Even if these comments were not likely to mollify the critics of the school, DuBourg undoubtedly hoped that they would cast the school in a favorable light with the general reading public.

IV. PRESBYTERIAN REACTION

In the latter part of the newspaper exchange, one of the writers made the point that protestant children should not attend Catholic schools. This in turn became the burden of a pastoral letter published by the Presbytery of Baltimore in 1811.

30Henry Mumford Jones, America and French Culture, 1750–1848 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1927). Jones noted examples of protestants who travelled to Canada or Europe for a Catholic education, something that he thought gave a cosmopolitan tone to American culture, 23–24.
31Bushman, Refinement, 187–195.
The authors “account it our duty to address you on matters of the most momentous concern, to the present and future happiness of you and your posterity.” Its tone was that of a declension sermon, a lament over the separation of religious principle from practice. If the former was corrupt so too would be the latter. Impiety would have consequences for the individual, but also for society at large, a point that the *Pastoral* made repeatedly. In Reformed protestant thinking in the early republic virtue and knowledge went together to create public happiness.\(^{33}\)

In the first part of the *Pastoral* infidelity and deism were of concern, not Catholicism: “In the knowledge and confirmed belief of these doctrines of the gospel, you would be enabled to expose and confound that infidelity, which now raises a bold and impious front for the corruption of public morals; and which, if cherished, would lead to the utter subversion of everything among us that is dear to us as men, as citizens, and as Christians.”\(^{34}\) In this concern with infidelity the *Pastoral* was consistent with the Presbyterian view of the religious condition of the United States as expressed in the General Assemblies held annually from 1789. Through 1810 there was no substantive mention of Catholicism in the minutes of the Assembly, but there were repeated expressions of concern about infidelity, deism, Unitarianism, and a general falling-off of religious devotion, both within Presbyterianism and in the population at large. After 1800, the minutes of the General Assembly brighten as they recounted missionary successes on the frontier and religious revivals in parts of the country, and in the years approaching 1810, even some success against infidelity and Unitarianism, but still no concern over Catholicism.\(^{35}\) If one was to judge solely from the minutes, it appeared that the Catholic Church was invisible to the leaders of the Presbyterian Church in the first years of the Republic.

The declension of which the Presbytery spoke was a spiritual phenomenon, a failure to maintain religious principle. From a worldly perspective Presbyterianism throughout much of the country was flourishing. Growth of the Presbyterian population benefitted in the eighteenth century from Scotch Irish immigration, as well as from successful missionary activity on the frontier. The Presbyterians in Baltimore were doing very well. The First Presbyterian Church of Baltimore, founded in 1760, was by 1811 a large congregation, housed in an imposing church building. Its membership


\(^{34}\)Pastoral, 8.

\(^{35}\)Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America from A.D. 1789 to A.D. 1820 Inclusive (Philadelphia, Pa.: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1847).
included the merchant elite of Baltimore, making it one of the most socially prominent churches in the city. A contingent had recently broken away from First Presbyterian to form the Second Presbyterian church and it too prospered.  

The declension of which the Presbyterian ministers complained manifested itself in the failure of protestant parents to educate their children in a way that would lead them to follow a Christian life. More than half of the Pastoral was an essay in the field of family religion, with an emphasis upon the duties of parents to raise their children religiously. In this regard it was essential that literary and religious education go hand in hand, either in public or private schools. Parents should monitor the virtue and piety of children’s associates, excluding instructors of unsound or infidel principle: “We forebear being personal, or we could mention some instructors who have instilled ‘Godwinian’ and Deistical principles into the minds of their pupils; and then sent them into the world, cursed themselves, and a curse to others.”  

Still there was no mention of Catholicism or attendance at Catholic schools, until the ministers made the point that catechisms should be based upon the word of God, the only infallible guide of faith and practice. It had come to their attention that St. Mary’s gave to protestant pupils a catechism written by the Abbe Claude Fleury for use in European Catholic countries.  

This catechism was a classic work, with innumerable editions in many languages throughout the years, and was generally considered to be an irenic work, which minimized the areas of Catholic-protestant disagreement. It was nevertheless offensive in that it taught, according to the ministers, transubstantiation, the cult of the saints and that tradition, along with scripture, was a criterion of Christian faith and practice. Parents who sent their children to this school were being deceived when told that their children were not subject to religious instruction in Catholicism. Moreover, the students attended a ceremony that was devoted to the absurd belief in transubstantiation, namely the Corpus Christi procession held at St. Mary’s.

37 Pastoral, 14.  
38 Claude Fleury, Catechismus (Philadelphia, Pa.: Johannes Conrad, 1805). This was a Latin version of the Petit Catechisme Historique, originally published in French in 1683. The American editor took the liberty of expurgating “the few chapters which contain the peculiar tenets of the Roman Catholic Church” (iv). Raymond E. Wanner, Claude Fleury (1640–1723) as an Educational Historiographer and Thinker (The Hague: Martinus Nbijhoff, 1975), 248–256.
Transubstantiation was most abhorrent, said the ministers, because it held that men could call into being the Body and Blood of Christ at their will. The ministers saw the procession on American soil as a gross effrontery in a nation composed predominantly of protestants. They argued that an act of similar tastelessness conducted by protestants would never be tolerated in a Catholic country. The catechism and the procession were the only things mentioned in direct criticism of the school, with the criticism of Corpus Christi relegated to an extended footnote. The ministers then went on to affirm the value of protestantism by contrasting it with corrupted Christianity, which was left unnamed, although its readers would have recognized it as Roman Catholicism.

In this section the synod adopted a filiopietistic tone and an historical approach. The theme was that society derived benefits from Presbyterianism and that Presbyterianism in turn benefitted from the American civil order. It urged that protestant students be made aware of the advantages, both civil and religious, that have flowed from the “blessed” Reformation to today’s Presbyterians and their posterity. Children should be taught “the excellence of our system of ecclesiastical government,” and the happy privileges to their country that flowed from this system. Protestants have been protected from all ostentatious pomp and pride of this world, something that was to the ministers’ civil and religious advantage.

The Pastoral mentioned pomp several times; it was of concern because it stood for everything in the civil and religious orders that offended the simplicity that characterized true Christianity. Pomp was the word that best described the monarchical and aristocratic culture of Catholic Europe, something from which the ancestors of the Presbyterians had fled. In this alternative system, the “ONE,” presumably the pope, usurped the religious rights of all. Making the usual argument against man-made tradition as a criterion of Christian doctrine and practice, the ministers wrote that doctrines that came from men, not God, distorted the divine simplicity of the gospel. There have been dreadful effects in the Church of Christ from persecution, martyrdoms, and tortures. Men also “blended the vain show and grandeur of the world with his worship—and its proud distinctions of power and rank with the self demeaning (sic) and humble principles of HIM who said, ‘Whosoever of you shall seek to be greatest, shall be servant of all.’”

The Pastoral so closely compounded the religious and civil aspects of society in their thought that there was no point in trying to extricate one from the other. In this regard the criticism of Catholicism addressed it not only as a religion but as a socio-political system that was alien to protestant America.

39Pastoral, 22.
Although the Pastoral was frank in its criticisms of Catholicism, it also expressed a commitment to the prevailing religious freedom and implicitly to the religious pluralism that freedom in religious matters implied. There was an obvious tension within the Pastoral between a commitment to principled criticism of another religion and a concern about being perceived as unduly harsh. Nevertheless too much liberality in religious matters and a lack of concern for principle was the first step towards skepticism, and therefore to be avoided. Accordingly, in their view, they were justified in criticizing another religious body.

V. DuBourg’s Response

The breadth of the Presbyterian criticism of Catholicism gave DuBourg the opportunity to respond in kind. He was happy to engage protestants on the grounds of the usefulness of religion, religion’s ability to bring happiness to people, and its civilizing function, for these were some of the Presbytery’s underlying themes and would be his as well. The defense of St. Mary’s and its continued success came at a time that was personally and politically important for DuBourg and the Catholic Church in America. His earlier forays into education at Georgetown, where de did not get along with the ex-Jesuits who controlled the school and in Cuba had not been successful. It follows that the success of St. Mary’s would have been personally satisfying, as well as justifying his continued presence in America. The slow start of St. Mary’s seminary, given the lack of vocations to the priesthood, put into question the role of the Sulpicians in America, with growing pressure from France for their return. A successful school did much to vindicate their continued work in America. It would also serve to give encouragement to the Sulpicians in their tense relationship with the ex-Jesuits, especially given the continued weakness of Georgetown which was controlled by the ex-Jesuits. More generally, a successful school, and one that could attract protestants in a predominantly protestant society, would do much for the prestige of the Catholic Church. As a French Catholic royalist, DuBourg was also anxious to demonstrate that the church in America could show educational leadership within a republican context, and in doing so make a commitment to education a part of the self-identification of the Church in the

40 Beneke, Beyond Toleration, 180–186.
41 Melville, Louis William DuBourg, 82–146.
43 Spalding, Premier See, 36–41.
United States. As he had put it in his response to the *Strictures*, foreigners could bring good things to America, something that he was happy to prove.

In the *Vindication* DuBourg began narrowly by addressing the issue of the Fleury catechism. He pointed out that St. Mary’s had long since stopped using the expurgated catechism of the Abbe Fleury, lest it offend protestant parents. Its use in any case had been to teach Latin, not religion. DuBourg argued that its supposed teaching of transubstantiation was a bare description of the gospel account of the Last Supper and its treatment of the cult of the saints a brief historical account of early Christian practice. He acknowledged that the section on tradition could give offense to protestants, and this had been the reason for dropping the catechism.

After his comments on the catechism DuBourg set about a defense of Catholic education and liturgy. DuBourg included no disclaimers in his work about being reluctant to engage in controversy. He was vigorous in rebutting the criticism of the school and Catholicism.

**VI. AMPLITUDE OF THE CHURCH**

In structuring his response, DuBourg repeatedly used two themes from the *via notarum*, a school of Catholic apologetics that developed in the sixteenth century in response to protestantism. Robert Bellarmine had argued in his *De notis ecclesiae* that there were fifteen notes of the true church, and that the Catholic Church alone among Christian churches exhibited all of them.44 A popular note was amplitude, the notion that size and the variety of peoples that belonged to it characterized the true church. This argument was a commonplace in French apologetics of the eighteenth century, being found in the works of both theologians and in the Encyclopedia of Diderot.45 DuBourg made at least a dozen references to amplitude. His first use of it was early in his paper in the context of his defense of the real presence and transubstantiation: “Besides, how many other societies claim the literal sense! Thirty millions of Greeks, with one hundred millions of Catholics, discover in the words of Christ nothing but the real presence and transubstantiation; and of thirty millions of Christians of all the other denominations put together, how many who still retain the real presence! More than half of that number has received their faith from Luther and his

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colleagues, none of whom, you will know, ever could reconcile their consciences to the figurative sense.\textsuperscript{46}

DuBourg did not discuss how the Catholic view differed from the variety of protestant views of the real presence. Bishop Bossuet had done this in his \textit{Variation}. It was an approach that called for a high level of theological sophistication in both the presenter and his audience. Dubourg simply pointed out that few Christians held to the reformed position. In this way he made the position of the Presbyterians appear to be the idiosyncratic view of a small minority of Christians, separating them from the vast majority of Christians.

Apologists had used the argument from amplitude since the sixteenth century, and indeed Bossuet had used it in his defense of the Catholic belief in transubstantiation.\textsuperscript{47} However, DuBourg’s use of actual numbers of religious adherents was quite new. Until the latter part of the eighteenth century there simply were no numbers for adherents of the world’s religions in general or Christianity in particular. Those arguing for the amplitude of the Catholic Church had historically used descriptive accounts of the worldwide variety and size of the Catholic population, or had used proxies like the number of bishops or the number of schools affiliated with various religions, but not actual numbers of believers. By using numbers, DuBourg reinvigorated the amplitude apologetic for use in the nineteenth century, when all estimates showed a vast majority of Catholics over protestants.\textsuperscript{48}

Other references by DuBourg to the size of the church include one that explicitly addressed the religious situation of the United States. Here with its variety of religious societies, it is easy to forget that the Catholic Church has a vast worldwide superiority in numbers over protestants, even when all of them are taken account of together. That DuBourg intended this change in perspective from local to universal to give comfort to the Catholic minority is clear from the conclusion of the \textit{Vindication}, where DuBourg urged the Catholic population to take comfort from numerical superiority. It was also an example of his aggressive positioning of the Catholic Church to an external audience in an environment where some were hostile to it. The church in America would not identify itself as a sect among sects, but only as a part of the universal true church.

\textsuperscript{46}DuBourg, \textit{Vindication}, 8–9.
\textsuperscript{47}Bossuet, \textit{Variations}, 1: 80.
\textsuperscript{48}DuBourg’s numbers are nearly identical to those of William Carey, the Baptist missionary, who was one of the earliest to quantify adherents of the world’s religions and of paganism. The only difference was that Carey gave 44 million for the number of protestants. William Carey, \textit{An Enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the Heathens} (Leicester: n.p., 1792), 62.
DuBourg demonstrated the versatility of the amplitude apologetic in the way that he used it to defend against the charge that Catholicism was incompatible with republican government. The very universality of the church fitted it to accommodate itself to all forms of government, whether republics or monarchies. By ordaining obedience to established authority, the church performed a useful function for any form of government. Religion’s ability to control the passions and accordingly engender virtue and civil obedience was a commonplace of conservative political utilitarianism, a theme that was apparent in French apologetics of the eighteenth century, not to mention its role in Presbyterian thinking about the relationship between faith and government.

DuBourg upheld the compatibility of the Catholic Church and republics, but this was a long way from the virtual identification of Presbyterianism with the American republic that the Presbytery endorsed. A republic might be acceptable to the church in DuBourg’s view, but he did not suggest that a republic was the best or most desirable form of government. Monarchies were just as acceptable. As a self-described “emigrant Royalist,” for him the church’s acceptance of the American form of government would be contingent in its nature, a matter of practicality rather than of deeply held principle. Those who wanted a near identification of church with the American republic would have to look elsewhere.

VII. ADVERSARIES, REVERTS, CONVERTS AND CATHOLICS BEAR WITNESS

Amplitude enabled DuBourg to position the church as something greater than and above protestant sects, which were made to seem provincial, even marginal, within the wide world of Christianity. In addition, DuBourg cited a large number of authorities who supported some aspect or position of the church. There are literally scores of these cited names, many of them French, throughout the Vindication. The appeal to the so-called confession of adversaries was one explanation for the citations, and the other was French Catholic apologetics of the eighteenth century. Bellarmine identified one of

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51 Strictures, 26.
the notes of the church as the confession of adversaries. This meant that the very act of an opponent of the church, or at least of a non-Catholic, in making favorable remarks about the church was evidence of the church’s truth.\(^\text{52}\) This caused apologists through the centuries to search out appropriate quotations by adversaries. Dubourg cited remarks of Francis Bacon, Voltaire, Denis Diderot, and Jerome LaLande in favor of Catholic education. He quoted from Diderot and Vicesimus Knox in support of Catholic ceremony, and for the supposed tendency of protestantism to lead to skepticism he cited an article in the French Encyclopedia written by an atheist.

In addition to adversaries, DuBourg cited many eminent Catholics, following the example of French apologists of the eighteenth century. These apologists, aware as they were that contemporary Catholic writers simply did not have the same cultural prestige as did the \textit{philosophes}, began to include lists of eminent Christian thinkers in their writings as a way of claiming intellectual legitimacy for Christianity. These lists in France included famous protestants like Newton as examples of intellectuals who were Christian.\(^\text{53}\) DuBourg, writing in an American context where protestants were the opposition, did not include any in his list of eminent intellectual and cultural figures, limiting himself to names like René Descartes and artists like Michael Angelo and Raphael. DuBourg also made a point of including a list of famous Europeans who had converted to Catholicism. He noted that for the astronomer Nicolas Steno, the general Viscomte de Turenne, the writer John Dryden, and the art historian Johan Winkelmann, among many others, belief in transubstantiation was no bar to their conversion. He also included a list of reverts, that is, former Catholics who had returned to the church, in many cases upon their deathbeds. These deathbed conversions were in many cases the result of a major exertion by the French clergy to see that well-known intellectuals died within the church. Protestants too were interested in these deathbed scenes. The death of Voltaire, for example, and his supposed acceptance of the Catholicism in which he was born, was a subject of interest in America, just as it had been in Europe.\(^\text{54}\) DuBourg’s reverts included members of the French Academy and others of some intellectual standing in France, but were probably not widely known in the U.S. None of them were members of the American Philosophical Society at a time when...
this Society had many French members. Although the deathbed would be a staple of American Catholic writing down to the present, controversy over the final moments of Catholic writers and intellectuals would not be common in the United States.

VIII. CATHOLIC EDUCATION

For Dubourg, the quality of Catholic education was an important part of his apologetics and of his positioning of the church in the United States, and a focus upon education would remain a central commitment of the American church. The relationship of religion to high learning in general and universities in particular was a subject of discussion from the beginning of the Reformation. Luther himself had argued that the Reformation could only have begun in a country of high intellectual achievement like Germany with its good universities. In America, competition between Catholic and protestant schools played a role from the start of higher education in the country, at least according to Cotton Mather. In Mather’s account of the founding of Harvard he wrote that Gisbertus Voetius, the Dutch Calvinist theologian, had “boasted” that the ten popish provinces of Belgium had two universities while the seven Reformed provinces had five. This quantification of intellectual achievement, according to Mather, motivated the Puritan possessors of the country to have “an University, that would be more significant than the Seminaries of Canada and Mexico.”

Protestants were not the only ones to count universities by religious affiliation as a way of measuring relative intellectual standing. Edward Hawarden, the English Catholic apologist, early in the eighteenth century counted the number of Catholic and protestant universities in Europe. He found that there were 93 Catholic universities to only 38 protestant ones, evidence for him of the amplitude of the Catholic Church. He also saw this

56 Barbara Sher Tinsley, *History and Polemics in the French Reformation: Flormond de Raemond: Defender of the Faith* (Selinsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University, 1992), 93, 95–96, 122, 209. The author identified Raemond, who lived in the sixteenth century, as a spiritual forebear of Chateaubriand. Raemond argued that Catholicism was superior to Protestantism both culturally and religiously, that Catholic rites were superior because they met the needs of the people, and that the Calvinist ministry was poorly educated.
57 Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England from Its First Planting in the Year 1620. Unto the Year of our Lord, 1698* (London 1702). Book IV, “The History of Harvard,” 126. The Canadian seminaries of both Montreal and Quebec postdate the founding of Harvard, so it is not clear what the founders of Harvard could have had in mind as a standard to be outdone. It may well be that Catholic universities in general were on their minds, in addition to the university in Mexico, founded in 1551.
differential as evidence that that only a few protestant areas maintained a high intellectual standing. England, the protestant part of the German empire, and Holland met this standard, while vast parts of protestant Europe including all of Scandinavia were barbarous at the time of the Reformation and remained so. That a Catholic publisher found this work sufficiently relevant to republish it in Baltimore in 1808 was evidence that American Catholics too saw university education as an appropriate area for inter-church competition, and one where they thought that they had the advantage.

DuBourg interpreted the Presbytery’s criticism as a charge “that the Catholic religion is in reality a declared enemy to the illustration and enlargement of the human mind.” These were his words, however, not the ministers’. In defense he used the utilitarian apologetics developed in France in the second half of the eighteenth century. Confronted with the charge made by the philosophes, and mirroring that made earlier by protestants, that the church fostered superstition and ignorance, and that it was a reactionary force holding in check the rational nature of man, French Catholic apologetics in the second half of the eighteenth century had begun to focus upon the usefulness of Christianity in bringing benefits to life in this world rather than the next.

One of the areas that the utilitarian approach underscored as a Christian benefit to mankind was education. The lecture that A.J.R. Turgot gave at the Sorbonne in 1750 was especially influential in this regard. DuBourg’s remarks on education were strikingly similar to what Turgot had argued. According to Turgot, although the ancient world had philosophers, they did nothing for the multitudes sunk in superstition but ridicule them. Christianity, in contrast, had sought to overturn superstition not just for the few, but for people in all walks of life. In endeavoring to teach all men, the church created a need for learned teachers and hence widened the sphere of education. For Turgot Christian metaphysics were superior to ancient metaphysics, since they dispensed with the complex subtleties that marked the latter. The University of Paris was a key institution in the progress of knowledge, and scholasticism, despite its dry nature, was a powerful tool in fostering learning. Indeed, this learning had beneficial effects upon society as

58 Edward Hawarden, True Church of Christ Shown, from the Concurrent Testimonies of Scripture and Primitive Tradition (Baltimore: R. Coyne, 1808; orig. England, 1714), 119–121.
59 S.J. Barnett, Idol Temples and Crafty Priests: the Origins of Enlightenment Anticlericalism (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999) for the recycling of Reformation priest craft charges during the Enlightenment; Everdell, Christian Apologetics, 109, “Undoubtedly, the utilitarian ethic is one of the master conceptions of the Enlightenment.”
a whole, and was effective in countering aristocratic domination of society. In
his positive view of the learning of the schools Turgot drew upon the
rehabilitation of scholasticism, and especially of Thomas Aquinas, that had
been underway for some time in France. His major theme, that Christianity
was a force for good in the progress of mankind, became an apologetical
staple that is still heard today.

DuBourg’s brief remarks at the commencement celebrating the school and its
graduates trumpeted the success of Paris and the other universities created in its
image with suppressing superstition and cleaning the sanctuary of its influence.
In his denunciation of superstition DuBourg sounded very much like a
philosophe or protestant, although what each of these meant by superstition
varied. The further remarks he now made in the Vindication built upon
his commencement remarks. There was one major difference. In the
commencement remarks he made no distinction between Catholic and
protestant, but referred to Christian education and included protestant
colleges in America as part of the tradition stemming from the Middle Ages.
In marked contrast, In the Vindication he was at pains to differentiate
Catholic intellectual life from protestant. He began by citing the intellectual
strength of the fathers of the church as evidence that Catholicism was not
hostile to the progress of knowledge. He added that the fathers of the
Reformation were themselves the product of Catholic education. According
to DuBourg it was Catholic universities that were responsible for the
scientific work that benefitted society. Printing had furthered the human
search for knowledge, but protestantism proved to be an impediment to
intellectual endeavor. DuBourg once again relegated protestants to the
margins when he wrote that the vast majority of intellectuals remained true
to Catholicism and continued the thoughtful work that predated the
Reformation. The church was also devoted to education for every level of
society. DuBourg supplemented his historical argument with the confession
of adversaries, citing remarks favorable to Catholic education by critics of
the church. The adversaries who Dubourg cited in support of the quality of
Catholic education were some of the leading lights of French intellectual life,
as noted above, all of whom were educated as Catholics in Catholic schools.
He followed this with his list of reverts, evidence that men did not suffer
from their Catholic education.

61Jeffrey D. Burson, “The Catholic Enlightenment in France, from the fin de siècle Crisis of
Consciousness to the Revolution, 1650–1789,” in A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment
62Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, “L’Apologetique Catholique Francaise an L’Age des Lumieres,”
171, noted the convergence of the language of Catholic apologists with that of the philosophs,
although the meaning that they gave to the same words could vary. The same could be said for
the language of protestants.
IX. Liturgy

The Presbytery had objected to the attendance of protestant pupils at the Corpus Christi procession held at St. Mary’s and had associated Catholic liturgy with much detested pomp. DuBourg’s rejoinder was that no protestant student was required to attend the procession, and those that did, did so voluntarily. On the larger point of the importance of Catholic ceremonial, DuBourg saw an opening that would enable him to both defend Catholic worship and attack that of the Presbyterians. Worship, which was certainly visible, was for DuBourg an important source of differentiation that would set off the Catholic Church from its protestant environment. He structured his argument by citing three adversaries in support of ceremonial. He mentioned in passing that Francis Bacon saw ceremonial as useful, and then quoted Diderot at length on the Corpus Christi procession as practiced in France. The quoted passage, probably the most famous words that Diderot ever wrote, was from his remarks on the paintings of the Paris Salon of 1765.

After criticizing a picture of the baptism of Christ, Diderot, sounding like an observant Catholic, although by this time he was an atheist and thoroughgoing materialist, argued that people should pay more attention to the quality of religious paintings since they were a means of religious instruction and a way to stimulate veneration of the saints. He then paid homage to Catholic ceremony, as quoted by DuBourg, as follows:

The absurd rigorists in religion are ignorant of the happy effect of ceremonies upon the people; they have never seen our adoration of the cross on Holy Friday; the enthusiasm of the multitude on Corpus Christi day, an enthusiasm in which I myself cannot refrain from partaking—I never saw those long files of priests in their sacerdotal habits, of young acolytes in their white flowing robes, girded with sashes, and strewing flowers before the Blessed Sacrament; those crowds of people which precede and follow them in a religious silence, so many men prostrated with their faces on the ground—I never heard those solemn and pathetic strains, intoned by the Priests and affectionately continued by a thousand voices of men, women, young virgins and children, without feeling my heart moved and convulsed, without a tear starting from my eye . . . Take away sensible

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63 Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, ed. John Goodman (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1995), vol. 1, 135–137. DuBourg incorrectly cited the Letter on Painting as the source of the quotation, but it was actually from the text of the Salon of 1765, to which the Letter was an appendix. Diderot’s critical comments on the Paris salons circulated in manuscript and his complete works included the Salon of 1765 and the Letter. Diderot’s writings on art were enormously influential in the nineteenth century, and accordingly his comments on liturgy were widely circulated. Of all the aspects of religious life, liturgy probably came through the gauntlet of Enlightenment criticism the least savaged. In addition to Diderot and Voltaire, Montesquieu had good things to say about Catholic worship in *The Spirit of the Laws*.
symbols, and all the rest will soon dwindle into an abstract galimatias, which will assume as many forms and whimsical aspects as there are heads among men.\textsuperscript{64}

DuBourg quoted these lines selectively from a longer passage that Diderot ended with an about face, which DuBourg did not quote, with the philosophe in him overcoming the Catholic: “For those who love truth more than the fine arts, God should favor the iconoclasts.” Still, his remarks testified to the vitality of paraliturgical practices in the \textit{ancien regime} and were also reflective of contemporary French Catholic apologetics. His association of religious ceremony with happiness was consistent with an emphasis upon religion’s role in creating happiness that entered French apologetics in the 1760s, just when Diderot was writing.\textsuperscript{65} Anything that had a happy effect upon the people was of great value in the thought of the eighteenth century. A stress upon happiness also was compatible with the utilitarian defense of liturgy that also became common at about this time. Some apologists in France argued that liturgy was important in maintaining social cohesion, a view that survived into the revolution.\textsuperscript{66} Others saw liturgy as useful in maintaining morality, as did Voltaire. In a passage that Chateaubriand quoted, Voltaire had written of the impossibility of someone committing a crime after taking communion amidst the stirring beauty and drama of religious ceremony.\textsuperscript{67}

For Diderot, ceremony’s usefulness was in its powerful effects upon the people in generating emotion that enriched the everyday quality of men’s lives. In emphasizing the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of religion in this way Diderot anticipated the affective utilitarianism of Chateaubriand: Diderot’s tears were but a precursor to those of Chateaubriand, who famously equated tears with belief: “I wept and then I believed.”\textsuperscript{68}

DuBourg also quoted from Vicesimus Knox, the Anglican minister and in his day well known essayist.\textsuperscript{69} For Knox, ceremony as practiced by Catholics could be useful, provided that it was not overdone. A purely spiritual

\textsuperscript{64}Diderot, \textit{Salon of 1765}, 136–137.
\textsuperscript{66}Everdell, 115; Mona Ozuf, \textit{Festivals and the French Revolution} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1988), 53, on the Corpus Christi procession as the model for a revolutionary festival.
\textsuperscript{67}Chateaubriand, \textit{Genius}, 72.
\textsuperscript{68}Burson, “The Catholic Enlightenment in France,” 115 on affective utility in Chateaubriand. Chateaubriand too described the Corpus Christi ceremony: “The God of the Christians is satisfied with the emotions of the heart and with the uniformity of sentiment which springs from the peaceful reign of virtue in the soul.” \textit{Genius}, 496–498.
religion, even if desirable, was not possible for most people. Ceremony was valuable even if only as a form of entertainment for the masses. His view was consistent with the ever-greater Anglian interest in the role of the arts in the ceremony of the church, a Catholicizing which would gain in force through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including among Episcopalians and other protestants in the United States.\footnote{Nigel Aston, \textit{Art and Religion in Eighteenth Century Europe} (London: Reaktion, 2009), 65–72.}

In arguing for the usefulness of ceremony and the importance of the arts in religion DuBourg sounded like the Chateaubriand of the \textit{Genius}. Although he did not cite him, internal evidence suggests that DuBourg had read Chateaubriand. DuBourg, who was writing before Chateaubriand was translated into English, was probably the first person in America to broadcast the views that were to be important for the Catholic revival of the nineteenth century.\footnote{The first English edition of \textit{The Genius} was an abridgement called \textit{The Beauties of Christianity}, trans. Frederic Shobert (London: n.p., 1813). This was republished in a U.S. edition in 1815. When DuBourg wrote of the great artists who have graced the church with their work the names that he cited were drawn from a list that Chateaubriand had used. This list included not only names that were widely known like Michelangelo and Raphael, but LeSeur and Poussin, the reference to which by DuBourg was not likely to have been a coincidence. DuBourg’s list also included the composer Pergolesi, who had also been mentioned by Chateaubriand, and the only religious composer named by both.}

The enthusiasm with which DuBourg wrote of liturgy mirrored that of Chateaubriand. For DuBourg, Christian art was of supreme importance to religion and artists benefitted the church, but the church in turn helped artists by assuring that they resisted harmful tendencies in the practice of art. When protestants drove artists out of the church they devoted themselves to secular art that stimulated the passions, leading to increased immorality.

In DuBourg’s view the lack of art and ceremony in protestantism was a baleful deficiency, appropriate to a religion that disdained the ancient past and presented itself as modern. In describing Presbyterian worship, he presented it as devoid of beauty and the good that beauty inculcates in stimulating worship. His description was of the original meetinghouse of the puritans, famous for its lack of comforts and its biting cold, but one wonders whether DuBourg had any personal experience of a Reformed church service. By the time that DuBourg was writing the plain meeting house of the earlier puritans was passing into history. Many Reformed congregations kept pace with Anglican attempts in America to embellish worship, especially through the incorporation of beauty into church architecture.\footnote{Edmund W. Sinnott, \textit{Meeting Houses in Early New England} (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963); Louis P. Nelson, \textit{The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism and Architecture in Colonial South Carolina} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008); Gretchen Townsend Buggeln, \textit{Temples of Grace}:}
Presbyterian worship was evolving. Presbyterian purists sought a scriptural basis for every element of their worship, as well as remaining committed to a simplicity and lack of rigidity in worship that would allow for the workings of the Holy Spirit. Despite this, by the early nineteenth century Presbyterians had already successfully incorporated vernacular hymns into worship, ending the monopoly of psalm singing. Just as DuBourg was writing, Presbyterians were adopting instrumental organ music into worship, not without an internal struggle. The First Presbyterian Church of Baltimore adopted use of the organ in 1811 and others would follow as the century wore on. Presbyterian church architecture also kept pace with the changes seen among other Protestants. The original First Presbyterian Church of Baltimore was a log cabin, but this was replaced in the 1790s with a large structure of noble design, characterized by a classical portico and two grand steeples on the front of the church.

Although DuBourg overstated the case for the bareness of protestant worship in America, further change would only come slowly for protestants given their suspicion of pomp and fear of idolatry, enabling the Catholic Church to differentiate itself in its worship from that of its rivals.

X. Variations

In DuBourg’s final section he reverted to a line of argumentation that showed the influence of Bossuet’s apologetics. For DuBourg, as for Bossuet, the protestant commitment to scripture as the only criterion of Christian belief and practice combined with individual judgment, without any reference to the authority or the tradition of the church, made disunity inevitable. For DuBourg, the variations in belief introduced by the Reformation were an unmitigated disaster. Protestantism was doctrinally unstable, and subject to chronic changes. Contemporary protestant attempts in the United States to remedy Christian disunity by seeking consensus on the fundamentals of the faith while ignoring nonessentials were all in vain, according to DuBourg. The distinction between fundamentals and nonessentials was false. Something was either a part of the faith or it was not.

Another problem that DuBourg had with protestantism was that it tended to lead to skepticism. In making this point he again relied upon the confession of


Beneke, Beyond Toleration, 82–84, for protestant efforts to unite around fundamentals.
adversaries, this time an article that he indicated was from the French Encyclopedia. DuBourg identified neither the article nor its author, but it was in fact one of the most famous articles from the Encyclopedia, that on Unitarianism by Jacques Andre Naigeon. Naigron, an atheist and associate of Diderot, and the editor of the first edition of Diderot’s complete works, wrote the article as if he were a Catholic, but in it took every opportunity to lambast the Catholic Church. The passage quoted by DuBourg noted that when a Catholic had doubts, he first became a protestant, then a Socinian, then a deist, then turned to Pyrrhonism, and finally to atheism. For Naigron this journey was a kind of skeptic’s pilgrim’s progress, beginning with justifiable rational doubts and ending in what he called the tranquility of atheism. For DuBourg, who left out the references to rational doubt and tranquility, the article made the point that anyone who turned to protestantism ran the risk of a slide to skepticism in matters of religion. Not only then was protestantism doctrinally unstable, but it was psychologically unstable as well. The point was that it was likely to disappear over time, something that DuBourg left as an implication, but that other Catholic apologists later in the nineteenth century would argue explicitly.

XI. THE LIMITS OF DISCORD

When Voltaire went into exile in England as a young man, he was impressed by the religious condition of that country, which could not differ more from that of France. Whereas France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 prided itself on its religious conformity—one nation, one king, one religion—Voltaire was struck by the multiplicity of religious sects in England, all of whom engaged in spirited verbal combat with the others. Yet for all the disparity of cult people in England got along very well. Something similar prevailed in the early republic. Although the religious regime in England was one of toleration, with a large established church and many smaller sects, and in the United States the regime was one of religious freedom, with no single predominant church, in both countries believers and non-believers alike were free to make the public case for their opinions and practices, while at the same time accepting religious pluralism as a given.

DuBourg used the Presbyterian Pastoral as an invitation to vindicate not just St. Mary’s but Catholicism itself. He could have limited himself to a rebuttal on

the matter of use of the Fleury catechism by simply saying that the school had discontinued its use, and left the matter at that, but he chose to do something bolder. The Presbyterian ministers, who themselves mounted a sweeping attack, provided a useful opening for DuBourg to respond in kind and help define the character of the Catholic Church in the United States. There was some risk in launching at attack upon the Presbyterians, a people with the economic means to do damage to opponents. Presbyterians had founded a college to compete with Transylvania University as a protest against its Unitarian president, and later Bishop England would argue that it was Presbyterian opposition to his literary institute in Charleston that caused that school’s failure. The confidence with which DuBourg attacked Presbyterianism suggests that he believed he could count upon public opinion to support him. There was certainly nothing to fear from government intervention, nor from the kind of religious violence that occurred on an occasional basis later in the century. Importantly, DuBourg knew his audience. As long as he was not lying about having suspended use of the catechism or about non-Catholics abstaining from religious ceremonies, and as long as the school’s track record in making converts remained abysmal, he knew that protestant parents were not likely to withdraw their children from the school.

DuBourg’s *Vindication* should also be seen within the context of what appears in retrospect to have been a conscious policy of the Catholic Church in America to project an image of amplitude and strength. Just as DuBourg was writing, a new cathedral was going up in Baltimore, and John Carroll in his fund-raising appeals used language about the amplitude and splendor of the Church that was similar to DuBourg’s. The Sulpicians had enhanced worship through music when they first came to the United States, and DuBourg was an enthusiastic proponent of a grand cathedral in Baltimore. Church buildings and schools were sure attention getters of the era, and church authorities were intent upon using both to help define a highly visible presence for the church in America. A measure of their early success was the criticism that it brought down upon St. Mary’s.

The irenics that DuBourg displayed in his commencement address were not entirely absent from the *Vindication*. He pointed out that a practice like infant baptism in which both Catholics and Presbyterians engaged was based upon a common use of tradition. When writing that only unbelievers would exult from the mocking tone that the Presbytery used in speaking of the real presence, and that the infidels would use the same tone in treating of Presbyterian beliefs like the Trinity, the incarnation, and the divinity of Christ, he did not have to add that these doctrines were held in common

with Catholics. Although bold in the American context, DuBourg’s criticism of Presbyterians was mild when compared with some charges that Catholics had made against Calvinists in France. Going back to the Reformation in France, Catholics had charged that Calvinists hid gross licentiousness behind their claims to superior moral behavior. Given Calvinism’s doctrine of private judgement charges of antinomianism, coming from many quarters, including from other protestants, would haunt Calvinists through history. Other than a statement that heresy itself was a form of immorality, there is no hint in DuBourg about the moral shortcomings of protestants.

Another charge by French apologists against Calvinists during the Reformation and later was that they were disruptive of French society and subversive of the state. Protestant loyalty was under question, and French authorities monitored the size of the protestant population as they would that of a potentially dangerous enemy. There is none of this is DuBourg, who left unquestioned Presbyterian commitment to an orderly society and the republic.77

DuBourg used language that was very much consistent with his times, with his emphasis upon happiness, usefulness of religion, beauty, and educational achievement. Even while differentiating Catholicism from its protestant environment his language mostly overlapped with that of the Presbyterians. They also valued religion for the happiness it could bring and the support that it provided to social and political morality. This underlying similarity in the way that each made the modern case for their religion kept discourse within certain bounds of amity.

The awkward structure of the Pastoral, in which the criticism of the use of the catechism appeared as if it was an afterthought, and the criticism of the Corpus Christi procession appeared in a footnote, was suggestive of the internal tensions that held the Presbyterians in check when it came to criticizing another religion. According to the Pastoral the reluctance to engage in controversy delayed the ministers’ reaction to the catechism issue. Moreover, DuBourg indicated that at least one member withdrew from the project, suggesting that there was some internal dissent about the wisdom of publishing a controversial piece. The shift in the Pastoral from concern over infidelity to concern over Catholicism mirrored the experience of the Presbyterians of the time. With the Presbyterian/Congregational hold on education already under challenge by Unitarians, Presbyterians now saw before them a successful Catholic college, and one that attracted protestant students. They would also have been aware of and sensitive to the growing

physical visibility of the Catholic Church. The *Pastoral* accordingly marked something of a milestone, with Catholicism being added to the list of opposing religions with which the Presbyterians would have to do battle over education.

Catholicism provided an opportunity for the Presbyterian ministers to define themselves by their differences with it. In a telling remark, the ministers mentioned that there was an advantage to the holding of the Corpus Christi procession at St. Mary’s. It demonstrated the greater liberality of protestors who tolerated its presence in a protestant country while no Catholic government would tolerate something as obnoxious to Catholicism as the procession was to protestors. By affirming the Presbytery’s commitment to freedom of conscience and to the civil and religious freedom that stemmed from the Reformation, the *Pastoral* became not just a screed against Catholicism but an affirmation of Presbyterian principle. It was a concern over encroachment upon the American system that motivated the *Pastoral*, not controversy for the sake of controversy.

There was an irony in the ministers’ concern over Catholic pomp, since the *Pastoral* came at the very time that Presbyterians were beginning to introduce organ music in their services, a monumental change that did not come without controversy within Presbyterianism. Presbyterians were also leaving log cabin churches and ice-cold meeting houses behind, electing instead sacred buildings, often in the Gothic style. None of these changes occurred without internal tensions, and criticizing the greater pomp of Catholics enabled the Presbyterians to assure themselves that they were not going too far in a Catholicizing direction.

What the *Pastoral* advocated was quite modest. It did not call for any government interference in St. Mary’s, or that Catholics cease attending the school. It only urged protestants not to attend. The mingling in school of Catholics and protestants, which the *Pastoral* could not stop, testified to the amity that could exist among people of differing religions in the early republic.

**XII. Conclusion**

In his *Vindication* DuBourg integrated into a coherent whole several strands of Catholic apologetics. He was less interested in providing a formal theological defense of Catholic belief and practice, but wanted to defend the church in a way that the population at large could understand. He underscored the large size of the church compared with protestants, endeavoring to point out their marginal nature among the world’s Christians. He provided a cultural history that argued for the benefits to the world stemming from Catholic education, compared with the woeful record of protestantism in interrupting the revival
of leaning ushered in by printing. Catholic fondness for art and ceremony was a source of happiness and emotional fulfillment for people that protestantism lacked.

Something is known about the reception of DuBourg’s *Vindication*. The critic who probably meant the most to DuBourg was pleased with the work. Archbishop Carroll, in a letter to a Sulpician in France who had previously been in the United States, noted the Presbyterian pastoral and wrote, “To this violent and groundless assault your Brethren have given a triumphant answer, which leaves nothing to wish, and has covered the assailants with ignominy.” Although Carroll generally tried to avoid controversy over religion, his remarks show that he could appreciate a good drubbing of protestants when they started the fight.

Although neither the Presbytery as a whole nor any of its members responded in print a protestant response was quick in coming. In 1812 there appeared *A Defence of the Pastoral Letter of the Presbytery of Baltimore, in reply to the Vindicators of St. Mary’s College, etc.* by James Crowley, who identified himself as formerly a Catholic seminarian at Maynooth in Dublin. He defended the pastors’ concern with the Fleury catechism, and reiterated their objections to Catholic ceremonial and the Real Presence. He also gave a brief history of the church, emphasizing the corruptions that came to be embodied in it through the ages. He argued that the Catholic Church suppressed intellectual freedom, citing the Galileo case, and that it was hostile to republican institutions. He implied that the presence of Catholics was a threat to the republic. To explain what he saw as the overwrought zeal of the *Vindication*, he noted that the authors, of which he thought there was more than one, were the Sons of St. Dominic, the defender of the Inquisition. In return, there later appeared a work called *The Sons of St. Dominic*, of which DuBourg is thought to have been an author, and which recapitulated some of what was in the *Vindication*.

DuBourg’s legacy included the ongoing success of St. Mary’s. When he left the school in 1812 to become the Administrator and later Bishop of New Orleans, in which position he served until his return to France where he served as a Bishop and then Archbishop, his work at the school came in for some criticism because of the large debts that he left, the result of his

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79 James Crowley, *A Defence of the Pastoral Letter of the Presbytery of Baltimore; in reply to the “Vindictors of St. Mary’s College. Etc.” with an Appendix containing reasons for recantation from the errors of the Church of Rome* (Baltimore, Md.: Warner and Hanna, 1812).
80 *The Sons of St. Dominick: A Dialogue between a Protestant and a Catholic, On the occasion of the late Defence of the Pastoral Letter of the Presbytery of Baltimore, against The Vindication of St. Mary’s Seminary, and Catholics at large, etc.* (Baltimore, Md.: Bernard Domin, 1812). Gorman, 16, on the authorship.
generous spending. There is no evidence that the criticism of St. Mary’s by the Presbyterians did the school any harm. The school continued until 1851 when the Sulpicians decided to devote themselves again exclusively to seminary work, and the Jesuits assumed the mantle of Catholic college education in Baltimore with the founding of Loyola College.

Education would remain an area of protestant-Catholic discourse. When at the General Assembly of 1835 Presbyterians broke new ground and voted that Catholicism was not a form of Christianity, it also reiterated the warning that protestants should not send their children to Catholic schools.\textsuperscript{81} Despite this warning protestants continued to do so.\textsuperscript{82}

It is striking how much space was devoted to schools in Catholic publications of the nineteenth century. When from the 1820s on protestants began to focus upon what seemed like a never-ending increase in the number of Catholics, one of the things of which they took notice was Catholic schools. DuBourg’s legacy as the founder and defender of a successful Catholic school was an important and lasting contribution. As the first to give a spirited public defense of Catholicism’s intellectual and cultural achievements, he laid the groundwork for an important way that Catholics would identify themselves in the United States.

Because Catholic apologists did not identify their sources, it is difficult to trace the influence of DuBourg upon later defenders of the church except in the most general way. Bishop England, as noted, used the same argument as DuBourg about how the church’s amplitude enabled it to work within different political systems; DuBourg’s description of the sterility of protestant worship was replicated by other writers later in the century; and his use of actual numbers to illustrate the Catholic Church’s amplitude became common. His broad legacy included the embrace of grand liturgy as a way to differentiate the Catholic Church from its protestant environment, making him a leading exponent of the romantic revival of Catholicism in the nineteenth century. There would be much on painting, music, and architecture in American Catholic publications later in the century, making the church something of a teacher to the American public in matters of high culture. The incorporation of art into worship was a source of strength for the Catholic Church, which would watch bemused as later protestants of many stripes hastened to catch up in the elaboration of worship through the incorporation of the arts.

\textsuperscript{81}Minutes of the General Assembly, 490.
Not all subsequent apologetics would follow themes emphasized by DuBourg. William Cobbett’s *A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland*, published in installments in 1824–1826, condemned the Reformation for the economic and social havoc it wrought upon English and Irish society. It became a popular work for Catholic apologists, who reiterated its condemnations of contemporary English society’s treatment of the poor. This in turn led later in the century to the social statistics approach to apologetics. Everything that could be measured—rates of crime, suicide, health measures—were pressed into service to argue for the superiority of Catholic over protestant societies, and vice versa. These newer approaches did not eliminate the kinds of things that DuBourg had written about, but supplemented them.

Perhaps DuBourg’s most lasting legacy was the combative tone of his bold apologetic, and the self-confidence that it exuded. This would have a lasting influence upon the assertive way in which Catholics identified themselves to the wider population, as well as upon their tendency to look upon American protestant religion and culture as inherently inferior. The rhetorically aggressive style used by DuBourg in his *Vindication* became the standard for much of American Catholic apologetics in the nineteenth century.83

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