



# In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension

*Jay P. Dolan*

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## **In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension** Jay P. Dolan

For more than two hundred years American Catholics have struggled to reconcile their national and religious values. In this incisive and accessible account, distinguished Catholic historian Jay P. Dolan explores the way American Catholicism has taken its distinctive shape and follows how Catholics have met the challenges they have faced as New World followers of an Old World religion.

Dolan argues that the ideals of democracy, and American culture in general, have deeply shaped Catholicism in the United States as far back as 1789, when the nation's first bishop was *elected* by the clergy (and the pope accepted their choice). Dolan looks at the tension between democratic values and Catholic doctrine from the conservative reaction after the fall of Napoleon to the impact of the Second Vatican Council.

Furthermore, he explores grassroots devotional life, the struggle against nativism, the impact and collision of different immigrant groups, and the disputed issue of gender.

Today Dolan writes, the tensions remain, as we see signs of a resurgent traditionalism in the church in response to the liberalizing trend launched by John XXIII, and also a resistance to the conservatism of John Paul II. In this lucid account, the unfinished story of Catholicism in America emerges clearly and compellingly, illuminating the inner life of the church and of the nation.

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