

## *The Catholic Herald and Visitor and the Catholic*

Roman Catholic newspapers are important but overlooked sources providing an intimate window into Catholic thought in Civil War-era Pennsylvania. A sizeable portion of Philadelphia's and Pittsburgh's Civil War-era populations were Roman Catholic, mostly recent Irish and German immigrants. Indeed, an estimated 225,000 Philadelphians were Catholic; the diocese included 160 churches, 158 priests, and three colleges by 1861. In Pittsburgh, there were an estimated 50,000 Catholics, 86 priests, 77 churches, and one college.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the conflict, Philadelphia's Catholics found a voice in the *Catholic Herald and Visitor*.<sup>2</sup> Catholics in western Pennsylvania published their own weekly in Pittsburgh named the *Catholic*. For most of the war, the *Herald* was the "official organ" of Bishop James Wood of Philadelphia, while the *Catholic* was published with the approbation of Pittsburgh's Bishop Michael Domenec. These weeklies were the only locally edited English-language Catholic papers in the state, a fact that gave them an important role in shaping Catholic opinion in Pennsylvania during the Civil War.<sup>3</sup>

Not only are the *Herald* and *Catholic* good sources for Civil War historians seeking to understand similarities and differences between Catholics and Protestants during the war, they also prove that there was some variety of opinion among Northern Catholics themselves. For example, many of New York City's Catholic newspapers, such as the *New York Freeman's Journal* and the *Metropolitan Record*, were strong opponents of both the war and emancipation, and their editors openly called for an immediate peace and supported the Democrats. Similarly Philadelphia's *Herald* favored

<sup>1</sup> *The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory* (Baltimore, 1861), 68, 72.

<sup>2</sup> The *Herald's* full title changed to the *Universe: Catholic Herald and Visitor* at the beginning of 1864. "Change of Heading," *Universe: Catholic Herald and Visitor*, Jan. 2, 1864. Part of the reason why these sources have been overlooked is that it is very difficult to obtain a complete run of either paper on microfilm. While the *Herald* has been recently digitized, the only partially microfilmed years readily available on loan are 1860, 1862–1864. Pittsburgh's *Catholic* is available for 1861–1865 on microfilm at the University of Notre Dame Archives. In addition, Duquesne University has begun to digitize it and make it available online. The best places to find what remains of the *Herald/Universe* (1861–1864) are Villanova University and the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center. For an overview of the *Herald's* coverage of the Civil War, see Joseph George Jr., "Philadelphia's Catholic Herald: The Civil War Years," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 103 (1979): 196–221.

<sup>3</sup> The *Herald* lost its status as Wood's "official organ" early in January 1864, henceforth it styled itself the "Oldest Catholic Paper in the United States" or a "Catholic Family Paper." *Universe: Catholic Herald and Visitor*, Jan. 23, 1864.

the Democrats and was not afraid to criticize Lincoln's wartime policies. Unlike antiwar Catholics in New York, however, the paper approvingly noted and celebrated the loyalty of Catholics and their clergy to the Union cause. Pittsburgh's *Catholic* was even more vocal in its support of the administration against "unjustifiable rebellion." Its editor called upon citizens to "rally around the old flag," and soon Old Glory was raised over several Catholic institutions and churches in Pittsburgh.<sup>4</sup>

Both papers cheered the successes of Northern armies while taking a somewhat hostile or indifferent attitude towards emancipation. The *Herald* extolled Catholic patriotism manifested through the sacrifice of Irish Catholics who gave their lives for the American cause in battles such as Gaines's Mill despite the anti-Catholic prejudice. The *Catholic* closely followed (and praised) the career of the Union army's most devout Catholic major general, William S. Rosecrans. While both papers opposed radical abolitionists, neither blamed the war on them alone (as the New York Catholic papers often did), and both were careful to denounce the South as "wanton" and the "aggressors." Even as the *Herald* justified Irish Catholics' dislike for abolitionists by linking them to prewar nativism and anti-Catholicism, it took a comparatively enlightened view on race, stating that it was "openly against Catholic morals to hate the African in the heart." Indeed, the *Herald* was one of the few Catholic papers in the nation to support the use of black troops in the Union army. The *Catholic*, which carefully avoided discussing the Emancipation Proclamation directly, blamed the war on national "vanity" rather than slavery. Both papers showed signs of war weariness in 1864. And yet, even as the *Herald's* editor hoped for peace, he refused to acquiesce in Southern independence and faithfully supported nothing less than the restitution of the Union. These papers contain much invaluable information about Civil War-era Pennsylvania Catholics that should not be overlooked by Civil War scholars.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "How Can We Escape Ruin?" and "Lincoln's Abolition Proclamation," *New York Freeman's Journal*, Aug. 23, Oct. 4, 1862; "Peace" and "A Dishonorable Trick of the 'Catholic Telegraph,'" *Metropolitan Record*, Apr. 25, July 11, 1863; "New Year's Day," *Catholic Herald and Visitor*, Jan. 4, 1862; "The Loyalty of Our Priests," *Universe: Catholic Herald and Visitor*, Jan. 2, 1864; "The Duty of the Citizen" and "During the last week a large flag . . .," *Catholic*, Apr. 20, 27, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> "Glorious Union Victories!!" "Irish Patriotism," and "Abolition and Secession Overthrown," *Catholic Herald and Visitor*, Feb. 22, July 19, 1862, Dec. 16, 1863; "The Duty of the Citizen," "Victory," "The Cause of the War," "Gen. Rosecrans in Battle," and "The Campaign," *Catholic*, Apr. 20, 1861, Feb. 22, 1862, Apr. 18, 1863, Jan. 24, 1863, May 21, 1864; "The Irish and Slavery," "The Black Soldiers," and "Peace," *Universe: Catholic Herald and Visitor*, Apr. 2, 30, Aug. 27, 1864.